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# GERIATRIC HEALTH IN AN UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL EMERGENCY AND STRATEGIES TO ALLEVIATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

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**Abstract:** *COVID-19 causes unimaginable fatality among the elderly people worldwide. Amid the crisis, elderly people need tangible and intangible support for them to deal with the dilemmas, anxiety, loneliness, and even suicidal tendencies. This article discusses on how the elderly has been affected by COVID-19 that created a worsening situation and exacerbated detrimental health outcomes among older people. It examines the impact of COVID-19 to geriatric health to which governments, health agencies, and scientific community need to address. Proposed strategies in this article may mitigate the health risks of the elderly due to a global health crisis. Older adults can use digital platforms and digital health technologies to build social relationships and mitigate their health care needs. Recommendations for research agenda on geriatric health are discussed particularly in the context of ageism amid the pandemic. The rights, dignity, and welfare of older adults need protection for they are susceptible to this coronavirus pandemic and to future virus outbreaks.*

**Key words:** COVID-19; ageism; digital health; health interventions; health strategies

## 1. Introduction

COVID-19 presents a permeating challenge to all people across the globe and the older adults are no exemption to the dilemmas and chaos that it brought to their social, emotional, and physical circumstances. The key strategies to mitigate the virus spread include social or physical distancing, proper hygiene, isolation, contact tracing, testing, monitoring and boosting immunity (Ranasinghe, Ozemek and Arena, 2020). Mills, Kaye and Mody (2020) reported that pieces of literature have shown that age is a significant predictor for the poor outcomes of the patients with COVID-19. Thus, at the advent of COVID-19, the aging population's social relations get immense gaps as their social isolation gets heightened due to social distancing containment to rid the virus (Adalja, Toner and Inglesby, 2020; Klein, 2020, Guangdi and DeClercq, 2020; Ranasinghe et al., 2020; Wu and McGoogan, 2020). Likewise, they can experience the rates of depression, anxiety, and trauma as among the psychological impacts of COVID-19 to their mental health (Özsungur, 2020). The long periods of confinement and isolation, sense of insecurity, fear of contagion, and infodemic overload (Burtscher, Burtscher and Millet, 2020; Ranasinghe et al., 2020) add to the psychological stress and anxiety of the elderly.

Despite the advances in today's society for the elderly population to have better chances of living longer through medicines and technological innovations (Chatterjee and Price, 2009), the present situation takes a toll on their entire physical and psychological health due to the extreme measures to ensure that they are secured from COVID-19.

However, the elderly people "require immediate responses to avoid reaching extreme situations of social and tanatopolitical crisis" (Klein, 2020: 121). They need to have social relationships that can improve their longevity, a sense of well-being, and a better psychological and mental health (León-Jiménez, 2020). The feeling of being valued or mattering gives elderly people the sense of belongingness in contrast to the feelings of expendability (Flett and Heisel, 2020) while under immense health pressures of the current global health pandemic.

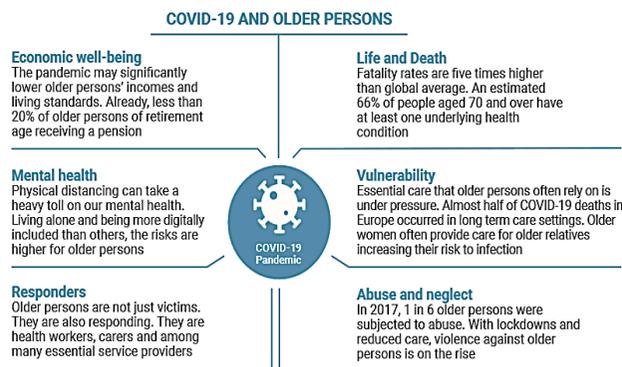
The management of COVID-19 creates enormous challenges that need urgent solutions (López de Aguilera et al., 2020) not only at the race for the medicine level (Koff and Williams, 2020) but also for the level of the elderly citizenry. One of the major health challenges is the negative effects of isolation (Flett and Heisel, 2020; Klein, 2020) among the older adults. Loneliness already has a profound impact to their health concern and physical isolation exponentially adds to their social isolation (Flett and Heisel, 2020).

Research is imperative to the growing concerns concerning the suicidal tendencies of the elderly people during the pandemic (Flett and Heisel, 2020). This article points out that the elderly populations are overlooked in terms of their physical, social, and psychological needs during this emergency. However, the elderly people need tangible and intangible support such as services, comfort, social relations, among others for them to deal with the dilemmas, anxiety, loneliness, and even suicidal tendencies due to the detrimental effects of COVID-19 to their health and well-being. This article discusses how the elderly has been affected by COVID-19 that created for their health issues. It also introduces their social, physical, and psychological needs, and offers probable solutions to mitigate the health issues that they encounter due to the coronavirus.

## 2. Impact of COVID-19 to the aging society

Due to the persisting COVID-19 pandemics, the daily life of all people is worldwide are affected. COVID-19 presented physical, social, and psychological impact to the older persons (Figure 1). While numerous communities are enforcing social and physical distancing guidelines to mitigate the virus, the older adults are chiefly susceptible to severe disease (Morb Mortal Weekly Report, 2020) and death as they are hit hard by the virus due to a weaker immune system that comes of old age (Cawthon et al., 2020) and other multitudes of factors.

**Figure 1: Impact of COVID-19 among older individuals**



*Source: Adapted from United Nations (2020)*

The nutritional challenges are likely factors due to limited shopping hours, fear of going public, and longer period of unavailable healthy foods as the supermarkets struggle with the demands for consumption (Schrack, Wanigatunga and Juraschek, 2020). The consumption of greater salty food and non-perishable food among older people then increases their blood pressures and also a cause for weight gain or weight loss that can “detrimentally affect health and both physical and cognitive functioning for months, or even years, to come” (Schrack et al., 2020: 1). Likewise, the reduce physical activities and increases in the stress levels due to constant worrying on health risk, financial and economic constraints, and fear of the future can spike problems in their circadian rhythm and depressive symptoms along with greater fatigue

(Avasthi and Grover, 2018; Ferrucci et al., 1999; Grandner, et al., 2013; Larkin and Chantler, 2020; Schrack et al., 2020). The economic insecurity also heightens the vulnerabilities (Badana and Anel, 2018) among the elderly. COVID-19 has already caused some elderly, especially those living in rural areas to have economic crisis with slow and difficult recovery as they need to make ends meet so the economic disruption is very difficult to manage (Henning-Smith, 2020). The uncertainty regarding the transmission risk can also lead the elderly people to cancel their home health care services and this, in turn, can increase the likelihood of improper medication management, nutrition, and self-care (Schrack et al., 2020).

Considering the impact of sudden physical inactivity on overall health, the strategies in mitigating the potential negative effects due to isolation (Roschel, Artioli and Gualano, 2020) are paramount to the health issues that elderly people are facing.

Apart from the physical factors are social and psychological factors to consider. The social isolation of older adults is also a serious social and psychological concern because these may trigger neurocognitive or other mental health problems (Armitage and Nellums, 2020). The breakdown in social networks among older people due to COVID-19 may significantly impact their psychosocial support needs and mental health as physical distancing measures restrict their visitors and other activities (United Nations, 2020). These limitations on the situations could lead to a decline in cognitive abilities or dementia. The psychological effects of the pandemic to the elderly such as stress, loneliness, agitation, and anxiety (Meng et al., 2020) can have significant impact to the entire well-being of older adults. The public debates that arise where older people are considered of lesser value and expendable have detrimental effects to their mental health (Ehni and Wahl, 2020; Levy, Slade, Chang, Kanno and Wang, 2020).

COVID-19 exposed the need to understand ageism. Older people tend to think of vulnerabilities due to aging stigma and negative beliefs about themselves and the other elderly. However, they do not share the same experience due to harmful behaviors of ageism (Reynolds, 2020). Reynolds (2020, p. 501) stressed that "an individual's vulnerability to ageism, abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation is influenced by multiple biopsychosocial factors. Biologically, factors such as physiological health, stamina, and ableness guard against or contribute to vulnerability; so too do psychological factors (e.g., personality, mental health, self-perceptions, self-efficacy) and sociological factors (e.g., access to resources and support systems)."

These risk factors are linked to poor health outcomes among older adults that can likely outlast the pandemic and the long exposure to these factors may affect the elderly people's health for the remaining months, or even in the post-pandemic society (Schrack et al., 2020).

Though the impact of Covid-19 is tolerated by some aging adults, the scientific community is navigating partially blind in the efforts to develop therapies and vaccines to cease the novel coronavirus and future pandemics (Koff and Williams, 2020).

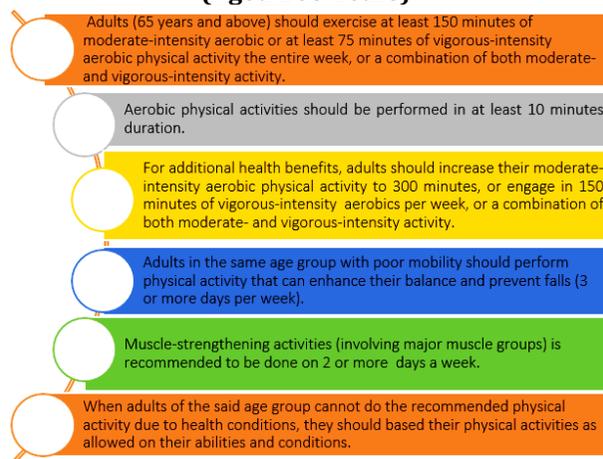
### **3. Proposed strategies to mitigate health issues among older adults**

Of critical importance is for international and national policymakers to reinforce the value of the older population (Roschel et al., 2020) in order to achieve the physical activity recommendations of the World Health Organization (2010) during the quarantine and lockdown period. Likewise, governments, agencies, and health institutions should prioritize and address the social needs and psychological support of older adults for emotional resilience and sense of well-being to rid anxiety and other negative effects of COVID-19.

**Physical Exercises.** The World Health Organization (2010) recommends a scientific-based physical health activity for the older adults (Figure 2). Roschel et al. (2020) stressed that evidence exist that regular physical activity and higher cardiovascular fitness among the elderly can show better responsiveness to vaccines but investigation remains to be seen for COVID-19. Nevertheless, the authors pointed out that government agencies, universities, and professional healthcare task force should develop, experiment, and monitor scientific-based physical programs to increase the activity levels of older individuals.

**Digital Health Models.** Exercise should be done in moderate intensities and volumes during the current pandemic, which is a nutritionally, psychologically, socially challenging environment in the presence of a virulent viral organism. Proactively creating innovative health promotion models with technology and government involvement with the best available evidence should be encouraged to reduce physical inactivity during the current COVID-19 pandemic and after (Ranasinghe, Ozemek and Arena, 2020: 1).

**Figure 2: Scientific-Based Physical Health Activity Recommendations for Older Adults (Aged ≥65 Years)**



Source: World Health Organization (WHO, 2010)

**Home-based Activities.** Leisure professionals can promote physical activity and social well-being among older adults by increasing home-based opportunities, including offering additional online leisure services, opportunities for volunteerism, and social interactions (Son et al., 2020: 1)

**Online Social Communities.** Part of the social distancing strategies of people worldwide is to partake in virtual or social network communities through taking advantage of the digital platforms to stay active in social relationships (Ranasinghe et al., 2020). Communicating through these social network platforms can facilitate innovative technology-based interventions that allow the older adults to also communicate with their friends while maintaining virus-prevention guidelines.

**Mental Health Professionals.** An increase to the available resources of the older people to feel valued and a sense of emotional resilience means having to train mental health professionals (Flett and Heisel, 2020) who can address and cater to the psychological needs of older people.

**Use of Telemedicine and wearable technology.** A useful tool during this COVID-19 (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2020) is telemedicine and wearable technology that can cater to the elderly by checking and monitoring them while minimizing their exposure to the risk of virus transmission (Portnoy, Waller and Elliott, 2020). Telemedicine and wearable technology can also provide a safer environment for research with feasible protocols for the remote collection of data. This technology also provides a platform for interventions such as messaging services to remind the elderly to take medications, among others.

**Online Technologies for Building Social Support.** The online technologies can also harness social support networks and belongingness among the elderly (Newman and Zainal, 2020), although there may be disparities in the access to digital resources (Armitage and Nellums, 2020; Friemel, 2016). "Tablet computers are (also) becoming increasingly popular among older people, and already account for 28%. Smartphones are being used by older people

at around 46%, meaning that almost half of the people over the age of 65 can potentially use all the functions that smartphones offer today” (Ehni and Wall, 2020: 519). Nevertheless, assistance given to other elderly who are not used to gadgets will help them with using digital technologies and other methods such as video-conferencing technologies can allow them to socialize with friends and families and participate in organizations and social communities (Buenaventura et al., 2020) either through online or remote measures.

**Gerontological Research on Health Interventions.** Ageism in the context of the pandemic needs investigation to create gerontological-friendly policies and alleviate social exclusion of the older adults. Programmatic research about the conditions of the elderly on a longitudinal perspective is highly needed (Flett and Heisel, 2020; McDermott and Newman, 2020) since there is growing tendencies for older people to commit suicide due to anxieties and depression brought by COVID-19. The observational studies can also describe the before- and after-effects of the COVID-19 to the older people considering their physiological, physical, cognitive, behavioral and mental health components (Cawthon, et al., 2020). Likewise, research on intervention or treatment and monitoring of physical activity, nutrition, sleep hygiene, and access to health care may quantify the impact of COVID-19 on the older adults’ chronic health conditions (Schrack et al., 2020). “Retrospective studies and natural experiments using individual historical serial data, if available, or clinically and demographically matched, population-based data may serve as alternatives” (Roschel et al., 2020: 1127). Thus, “over the long term, the research agenda will need to include cultivation of a new generation of multidisciplinary scientists trained in biomedical, informatics, and computer sciences in order to fully prepare for the next wave of emerging diseases” (Koff & Williams, 2020: 2).

#### 4. Conclusion

COVID-19 exacerbates the vulnerabilities among the aging population. It creates enormous challenges that need immediate actions and solutions not only at the race for the anti-vaccine but also for the elderly citizenry. The aging population is not able to do as much physical activities as they had previously enjoyed in their younger years and they experience a decline in their social relations due to COVID-19. However, they should not be deprived of their safety, welfare, and rights for mental, physical, and social support during this global emergency and in the post-coronavirus period. Policies and laws can be promulgated that ensure gerontological-based lens to also consider the welfare of older people as they are more susceptible to any future outbreaks. Thus, emergency response planning of the governments, agencies, and health institutions can address the health inequalities and inequities that detracts the older people. The elderly have the wisdom, leadership, and the experience to educate younger generations and they are part of the global citizenry, so they should not become the expendable cards in this unprecedented global health emergency.

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## YOUTH LABOUR IN THE PANDEMIC SITUATION: A CASE STUDY

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**Abstract:** *The sudden outbreak of the global pandemic has caused a huge economic setback in almost all the nations. The effects of COVID-19 were more on the developing countries than the developed ones. Millions of labourers have lost their jobs because of lockdowns. It affected the youth, the education system, etc. This paper mainly focuses on the youth labour and how the large scale of unemployment affected the youth and the way they dealt with it, and lastly how this COVID-19 pandemic has a negative impact on their career. The paper mainly studies the youth in the MENA region. The analysis mainly based on the reports of global unemployment, UN and OECD reports, case studies of MENA region and the steps to overcome it in the future areas.*

**Key words:** youth; labour; COVID-19; case studies; MENA.

### 1. Introduction

The outbreak of global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every aspect of our daily social and economic lives; with the ongoing challenge in our daily lives, the youth seems to have a long-lasting effect from the pandemic. The global survey aimed to capture the immediate effects on the life of the young people with the range of rights, activism, social well-being, education, employment and mental health. (ILO, 2020a). The global pandemic had led to a severe effect on the global market that had directly affected the young people on their quality of jobs, and it has resulted in mass scale unemployment. The workers during this period faced financial debts such as loans, tax deferrals, salary cut, etc. During the COVID period, it hits the young workers in recessions, and research suggests that entering the labour market during a recession has a negative impact on future earnings and job prospects. The education system has further been pierced by the COVID-19 global pandemic interrupting and disrupting the process of education the situation resulted in dropouts, lack of access to remote learning tools, comprising nutrition and lessening employment opportunities.

The young migrants affected and the refugees around 70 percent of all international migrants are below 30 years of age globally in 2019, 38 million international migrants who are below the age of 20 years (UN, 2019; IOM, 2020a). About 100 countries affected by COVID-19 have a refugee population of over 20,000 they are living at remarkably high risk and precarious living conditions. In some countries this have again resulted the death of the young migrant workers the loss of a job sometimes have resulted to suicide, in a few cases the migrant workers have died because of the precarious living or travelling conditions, The group gets left behind in the provision of healthcare when national systems' capacities are overstretched due to COVID-19. A risk is still involved that COVID 19 may further stigmatize migrants and refugees or increase xenophobia and racism, which in turn may further affect the ability of young migrants and refugees who are to receive proper healthcare and maintain their livelihoods. (UN, 2020)

Economic Political and social transformations have led to the change in global markets regarding jobs and career opportunities. The sudden outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic has given rise to structural changes in the global market, which had led to a severe economic crisis and

ultimately resulting large-scale unemployment among the youth. In Asian countries, it was still seen that professionals are turning to roadside vendors because of the lack of employment during the pandemic. (Kalleberg, 2020)

## **2.Literature Review**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to severe setback in the economic and labour market, the estimated rise was between 5.3 and 24.7 million in the number of those unemployed globally, the impact on youth employment among the age group 15-24 are already three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Moreover, COVID-19-related shocks to the labour market are likely to affect the quality of jobs for young people in forms of zero-hour contracts, informal employment, etc. These forms of employment are more common among youth, as 77 percent of employed young people hold informal jobs while 126 million are extreme and moderate poor working worldwide. The impact on the quality and quantity of jobs will probably disproportionately affect young people engaged in the service sector and/or performing manual routine jobs. Young people's jobs are at risk for experiencing excessive health-related hazards, as they cannot work remotely, which resulted in financial debts, mental illness (UN, 2020).

The social entrepreneurship can contribute sustainable and inclusive job creation. Unemployment among youth has been one of the greatest global challenges. Recent estimates suggest that 60million jobs would have to be created over the next 15years to meet youth employment needs. It is estimated that 96.8 percent of all young workers in developing countries are in the informal economy and lagging behind descent work. In developing countries, the low youth unemployment rates mask poor job quality. The proportion of the youth who are not in employment, education or training (the youth NEET rate) has remained high over the past 15 years and now stands at thirty percent for young women and thirteen percent for young men worldwide. Until structural barriers are removed, implementing employment-based interventions targeting young people may just fuel greater frustration in the future. The proper conditions, social entrepreneurship can offer youth an avenue to explore in their quest for sustainable employment. As social entrepreneurship leverages the talent of young people and capacities, it can support individual development and efforts to effect change. Young people, though frequently being excluded from policy and political decisions, which is affecting their lives and social entrepreneurship, offer them an avenue to express their views and have an impact on society. Youth are progressively more engagement in taking action to address development challenges themselves, including through social entrepreneurship. The creation and maintenance of a successful social enterprise often present obvious challenges; social entrepreneurship is appealing to youth, as it offers the unique combination of income generation and social impact. Entrepreneurs face many obstacles, but there are significant differences among the entrepreneurs in terms of contexts and needs. The youth social entrepreneurship has been successful, as it highly depends on the confluence of enabling factors such as conditions and settings or the entrepreneurship eco system. The extent to which the youth social entrepreneurship can reach is dependent, in large part, of this ecosystem (UN,2020).

The youth is experiencing difficulty regarding the inferior quality jobs reflect the broader rise in polarized and precarious work in several countries. The polarization of jobs is growing into good, well-paying jobs, and bad, low-wage, rather dead-end jobs in many countries. There is a general increase in the uncertainty and insecurity associated with all jobs, largely temporary and involuntary part-time work, but jobs that were formerly relatively permanent and part of job ladders which is offering wage growth and training opportunities. Young people have endured this expansion of low-quality work, specially the ones with less education. (Kalleberg, 2020).

### 3. Analysis in relation to Asia and MENA region

The case study analysis mainly focused on the Asian and MENA region because these regions, perhaps, are more affected with the youth labour situation. As these nations are the developing ones, quite a number of youth labourers are settled in foreign countries for better job and education opportunities. In countries like Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh these countries already experienced a negative scale on their employment status, COVID-19 have shattered their economy. The Asian countries have several students and working professionals settled in other countries who have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their loss of job not only affected the financial or the career growth of the workers but the economies of their respective countries have also experienced setback. The MENA regions have also a low scale of employment status due to gender issues (OECD, 2017) and education issues, it has remained the highest since last 25 years and because of pandemic, the situation of youth labour has worsened in these regions. Not just talking about the economy and financial status, it also affects the mental health conditions among the youth, resulting in suicides, debts, etc.

However, it is fully known that; the situation is definitely not the same for the full region, there is a significant difference in the wealthiest states of the Gulf. (OECD, 2020).

The economy in the present stage is not only passing the work, but it depends on political leanings, observers, which blame the financial market or the government state for any failures. (Dörre et al, 2018). In south Asian countries like India, Pakistan among these countries, it was seen that Bangladesh has the highest level of youth employment. Generation of youth employment is a key policy priority for the countries of South Asia (UNESCAP, 2018). The result of the overpopulation among youth, these countries are well poised to reap the dividends from a demographic dividend. (Navaneetham and Dharmalingam, 2012). The Conventional economic theory suggests that transfer of surplus labour from the rural agriculture sector to the urban industry sector gives rise to the structural and economic change in an economy, which may be conducive of the state (Lewis, 1954). The overpopulated youth among the South Asian countries have also resulted in the growth of migration of youth to different countries. Unfortunately, the structural employment in the South Asian countries are shaped in such a way that they have to share the youth with the agricultural economy as well. (Khatun and Sadat, 2020).

The Youth unemployment rates in MENA region have remained highest in the world for mostly 25 years. The youth employment in this region is facing problem because of the substantial social and political differences across the MENA countries. The MENA countries also have an issue of gender-based segregation of labour, the male professionals are tend to work more than woman which also leads to the root of its problem education, in short these countries are facing long existent issues regarding employment (Kabbani, 2019).

Recently, during March- April areas especially in mining, trading, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and other services sectors. These work fields are similar to Unemployment among young workers during COVID-19 recession. Employers are more interested to choose old workers because of various reasons, which depend on the culture of the industry, the nature of the work, and the cost structure. There may have been policies of ring the most recent hires at first as a way to keep the morale and support of long-time workers. Industries requiring significant firm-specific knowledge can be suitably employed with young workers with lower tenure, which would separate them from the firm with less loss.

As per the International Labour Organization, in which the participation rate of young people (aged 15–24) in labour force has continued to decline and also young people are three times than adults are likely to be unemployed.

The ILO in a recently published report entitled “Global Employment Trends for youth” (ILO, 2020b), which highlights that are some major structural barriers preventing the youth from entering the labour market, apart from their limited work experience which is against them when they are applying for entry-level jobs. One-fifth of the young people in the world

currently have NEET status, which mainly refers to the stagnation of their growth, means they are not gaining experience in the labour market, not receiving an income from work and not even enhancing their education and skills in various ways.

Young women have to more because of the gender gap, which is even more prevalent in the Middle East where the social, cultural norms and “security situation” have limited women’s education and career goals.

As per the reports of ILO (ILO, 2019), Sustainable Development Goals, which is targeted to be 8.6, has a substantial reduction in the proportion of NEET youth by 2020 and is being missed. Even at good times, in the early stages of a young person’s career labour underutilization affected the co-workers for a long-term including reduction in employment opportunities and reduction in earning potentiality in the future.

After the COVID-19 pandemic into the mix, and the impact become more dramatic. “Everyone is facing change, but an entire generation of young people will bear the brunt of COVID-19’s economic fallout for decades to come”. (Jafar and Dakkak, 2020). The university and school students started missing months of schooling due to the global lock downs, absence from education for months will have an impact on their employment sources for decades, few are even missing out on their jobs.

COVID-19 has given us massive challenges, which require involvement, mainly of business. We all must collaborate and ensure efforts so as to retrain and retool young people to succeed and have a growth for the better next generation in our region and to ensure the future growth of the world. income loses has been incurred partially which led to the total decline in the working hours, even in some cases it was seen that the working hour has increased but the payment regarding the working hours have declined even some people did not received the payments for months.

In the MENA countries are always being unprepared for a modern world of work and in the post COVID world that will be even more significant. But some societies of the Middle East have undertaken three steps to give young people an opportunity to remove large-scale unemployment young people (OCDE, 2020), as follows:

- **Tech/digital skills**

The graduates need to be proficient enough so that they can use basic computer programmes, tools in everyday work and make life more flexible so that they can switch between them.

- **English language proficiency**

English proficiency is the number one skill for employability in the modern economy in places like BPOs, etc.

- **Soft skills**

The soft skills have been overlooked, in post COVID world soft skills are very important such as basic business etiquette, emotional intelligence and the ability to deal with conflict productively.

None of these three skills is difficult to learn, but the training for them remains out of reach for many other skills. A suitable example, Crescent Petroleum recently announced a partnership with Edraak, which is in Arab and World’s leading platform for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), it helps to develop a series of open / free online career readiness courses, to boost the employability skills of young people across the Middle East region. It was seen that the private sector intervention is becoming more common as companies find that without direct action; it is harder to recruit young people with the skills their companies need.

The above course specialization is an example of how we can impact young people and give them much needed skills amid the momentous changes that are taking place under way. It relies on many other factors to succeed, as part of a regional ecosystem to support, young people as they enter the job market.

The empowerment of young people across the world for building a better future, and to tackle the challenge of youth unemployment, that not only implies to societal imperative, but it is also the means by which we will lift the economy out of the corona virus recession by filling skills gaps, wage gaps and promoting growth.

#### **4. Recommendations**

Clarisse Kouame, who is a pearl craftswoman, lost her job, as she had to close her store in Ivory Coste because of COVID-19. She had been a pearl artisan since last five years previously she used to work at home but later she opened a store quoting her words.

She is not there waiting, doing nothing. With her association of women, they had a raining on producing oyster mushrooms. She keeps on telling herself besides crafts she can always have another skill, which would be helpful in the future. Though today, she has n financial means, later she intends to make the marketing of mushrooms her another source of income According to her she still has hope. This empowering and motivating her every day that better days are yet to come. Clarisse faces not only this scenario, but there are millions of people who are going through this situation post pandemic.

Communities around the world, entrepreneurs like Clarisse, employers in various groups, corporate staff, and local partners, are coming up with solutions to help people find jobs, create jobs, and cope with unemployment. Here are a few recommendations that need to be undertaken to tackle the large-scale unemployment that occurred during COVID-19 pandemic.

Keeping markets open. Zimbabwe and Philippines are working with UN agency and the government in order to keep the markets open. Various UN Agencies are opening safe markets for both producers and consumers. These countries are also working with local partners and communities to set up mobile markets so traders can safely keep their jobs and prevent the level of unemployment and economic degradation.

Supporting farmers. Many people across the world have the job of growing food. In India, people are trying to is help migrants who are stuck in different parts of the country to return to their homes and getting small-scale farmers' efficient production out of their farms, and have markets where they can sell their production.

Helping entrepreneurs to market themselves, Iraq and Mali is being helped by the various UN agencies such as CARE partners is training women on how to market masks and make better sales. In Mali, they are helping distinct groups to connect to buyers in the UN system to buy the masks that Mali women make.

Adapting businesses to the new economy: Egypt has set up a virtual job fair for four companies under the project funded by Microsoft "Tawar w Ghayar" ([www.tawarwghayar.com](http://www.tawarwghayar.com)). Over 5,000 youth applies and 396 attended the virtual interviews, which is helping to create an engagement among the youth. Many other agencies are helping people find jobs making masks with local supplies. Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Mali, Egypt, and Benin are all help small traders shift their products, which includes masks, bags, soap, hand sanitizer, and other equipment that are in high demand for COVID-19.

Fight for the rights of the workers: In Ecuador and Mexico, CARE and the partners of UN are holding virtual advocacy campaigns to support domestic workers' rights and continue to push governments and employers to protect the domestic workers who are losing their jobs and is forced to live with their employers to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Supporting people who are losing their jobs. Over 44,000 countries are getting help from the UN agency named CARE, cash help is also being provided in over 35 countries. These agencies are also providing food help and cash transfers to the people who have lost their jobs in countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. United States have launched their own domestic package program to create jobs and provide food to people who need it. (IOM, 2020b; Bailey, 2013)

## 5. Conclusion

The spread of COVID-19 has reduced employment across all sectors, especially the services which is the principal employer in the Arab region. According to International Labour Organisation 13.2 percent of working hours were lost across the entire Arab region in the second quarter of 2020, compared to the final quarter of 2019, which is equivalent to 8 million full-time jobs, based on 48 hours of working in a week. The proportion of unemployment among people among the active population is forecasted to rise significantly in 2020, with a variation ranging from 6.6 percent in Kyrgyzstan to 25.7 percent in Jordan. As per various research and studies, the rate of economic growth and worldwide unemployment are to be improved in 2021.

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## JOINT CUSTODY: RATIONALIZING DIVORCE DISCREPANCIES IN FAMILY LEGISLATION

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**Abstract:** *Research in recent years in Europe and internationally has highlighted the growing need to review paternal role and the growing importance of fathers' continued involvement in the upbringing of their children through new parental care arrangements, such as the joint custody, so that the well-being of both the fathers themselves and their children is ensured. The purpose of this research is to investigate the joint custody and paternal role in divorce in Greece. During the research process, which started in January 2015 and is still ongoing to date, data were collected from 2,638 people, through a semi-structured questionnaire. According to the results of the research, it is a common request of both women and men to maintain the father's quality participation in the lives of children after divorce.*

**Key words:** divorce; joint custody; joint physical custody; children's well-being.

### 1. Introduction

Fathers' increasing participation in the daily lives of their children (Westphal, Poortman, and Van der Lippe, 2014) and the number of working mothers in recent years (Hook, 2006), as well as fathers' rights movements, who have been fighting for more equal childcare responsibilities after separation or divorce (Spruijt and Duindam, 2009), have contributed to the revision of custody laws (Juby, Le Bourdais and Marcil-Gratton, 2005), in several western countries, emphasizing/undelining the importance of continued parental involvement.

Joint custody refers to the regulation/arrangement that includes the joint legal and / or physical custody of children after parental divorce (Bender, 1994). The term joint physical custody (JPC) means that a child lives alternately and equally with both parents, moving between their respective homes (Melli, Brown, 2008; Spruijt and Duindam, 2009), whereas joint legal custody provides only for joint decision-making by parents on matters concerning their children.

Factors such as the number of women in the workforce, family law and cultural views on gender roles regarding fertility are some of the reasons attributed to transnational differences in publications regarding custody after divorce (Kelly, 2007).

In Wisconsin (USA), the proportion of divorced parents who had a joint parenting program increased from about 12% in 1989 to about 50% in 2010, 40% in Belgium and Sweden, about 30% in Norway, about 20% in Denmark, 40% in Quebec (Canada), 16% in Australia, 15% in Spain and 12% in the United Kingdom (Steinbach, 2019).

It is noteworthy, however, that neither of the new legal regulations on residence arrangements makes joint physical custody mandatory, but obliges the courts to seriously consider this arrangement, if one or both parents request for it. Thus, in most European countries, as well as in the United States, the most common regulation for the cohabitation of children with divorced parents is still single parental care (Bjarnason and Arnarsson, 2011).

## 2. Impact of joint physical custody on children's well-being

There is a strong consensus among researchers, professionals and lawyers that joint custody arrangements after parental separation or divorce benefit most children if the parents work together and have low levels of conflict (Amato, 2010; Härkönen, Bernardi and Boertien, 2017).

However, there is disagreement about the effect of children's joint physical custody if parents do not cooperate or have ongoing conflicts. On the one hand, proponents of joint physical custody believe that this arrangement always works in the child's best interests (Kruk, 2012; Warshak, 2014), even if the separated or divorced parents have ongoing conflicts. On the other hand, it is argued that ongoing parental conflict is extremely detrimental to children's well-being (Emery, 2016; McIntosh, Pruett, and Kelly, 2014; Pruett, McIntosh, and Kelly, 2014), as it exposes them to inconsistent parenting, and sometimes leads to underestimation of one parent by the other (Kalmijn, 2016; Vanassche, Sodermans, Matthijs and Swicegood, 2013).

As far as the latest results of empirical studies are concerned, joint physical custody after parental separation or divorce has a neutral to positive effect on children's well-being.

Several studies, which focused on mental health as a measure of child well-being, have showed that children in nuclear families had lower rates than children of divorced or divorced parents, but that children in joint physical custody settings had lower rates than those children in sole custody arrangements (Bergström et al., 2014; Bergström et al., 2018; Bergström et al., 2015; Fransson et al., 2016; Hagquist, 2016; Jablonska and Lindberg, 2007; Nilsen et al., 2017).

According to another Swedish study (ULF), it was found that there has been a significantly lower likelihood of subjective stress in children living in joint physical custody settings than in children living in sole custody (Turunen, 2016). In addition, Bjarnason and Arnarsson (2011) and Bjarnason et al. (2012) found that children in joint physical custody settings have the same or fewer problems with communicating with their parents, as well as the same or higher levels of life satisfaction compared to those children who live in single-parent families.

Other Swedish studies focusing on risky behavior (alcohol, illegal substances, smoking) have concluded that adolescents living under joint physical custody did not have or had slightly higher rates of risky behavior than adolescents who live in nuclear families, but significantly lower rates than those come from single-parent families (Carlsund et al., 2013; Jablonska and Lindberg, 2007)

According to Bauserman's (2012) meta-analysis, children under joint custody show better adjustment (general adjustment, emotional adjustment, behavioral adjustment, self-esteem, family relationships, academic performance, and adjustment to divorce) than children under exclusive (mainly maternal) custody regime.

Poortman (2018) concluded that the relationship between father-child contact and child well-being depends to a large extent on fathers' involvement in children's upbringing/rearing before separation/divorce.

In general terms, the controversy over whether or not joint physical custody is in all circumstances considered the best custody arrangement is reflected in conflicting empirical results. Some studies have found no or only minimal negative impact of conflict on children's well-being in joint physical custody settings (Spruijt and Duintam, 2009), while others have found that conflict increases the likelihood of negative outcomes for children (Cashmore et al., 2010; McIntosh, 2009; Vanassche et al., 2013).

Similarly, Sobolewski and Amato (2007), Kalmijn (2016) and Vanassche et al. (2013) have showed that adult children raised in high-conflict families or children of divorced parents did not have higher well-being when they had a close relationship with both parents, compared with those who had only a positive relationship with one parent. Several other studies have confirmed that it is not the total time spent with the child that is associated with better

outcomes, but the quality of parental care (Hagquist, 2016; Sandler, Wheeler and Braver, 2013; Spruijt, de Goede and Vandervalk, 2004).

The age of the child is another controversial issue regarding the choice of the less harmful custody arrangement. On the one hand, proponents of joint physical custody argue that infant-father attachment is just as important to the child as the infant-mother attachment. Thus, they emphasize the high importance of continuity in both relationships for the child's social, emotional, personal and cognitive development (Kelly and Lamb, 2000; Kruk, 2005; Warshak, 2014; McIntosh, Smyth and Kelaher, 2015).

On the other hand, other research has revealed that frequent overnight stays of very young children in two homes are associated with attachment insecurity and less regulated behaviors (McIntosh, Smyth and Kelaher, 2013; Tornello et al., 2013).

The best care cycle, depending on the age of the child, is an additional issue of controversy among experts, as some argue that it is very stressful for infants and toddlers to switch between two homes (Tornello et al., 2013), while others consider that even infants and toddlers can live in arranged joint physical custody settings (Millar and Kruk, 2014). Usually, preschoolers can change homes every 3-4 days, at the age of eight, every 5 to 7 days (Kelly and Lamb, 2000), and teens tend to be bothered by this alteration, since it disrupts their social life.

Overall, there are several relational and structural conditions that seem to favor beneficial joint physical custody arrangements (Gilmore, 2006: 26), such as geographical proximity, parents' ability to work together without (high) conflict, family-friendly working hours, the degree of financial independence, flexibility and high degree of response to children's needs, including the willingness to change arrangements to meet children's changing needs as they grow up (Cashmore et al., 2010; Fehlberg et al., 2011b ; Gilmore, 2006; Skjørten and Barlindhaug, 2007).

### **3. Dimensions of fathers' parental role in different family structures and children's well-being**

According to Thomson et al. (1994), parents offer their children two basic resources, money and time. Time gives parents the opportunity to show support (love and warmth) to their children and control (supervision) (Baumrind, 1991). Divorce and the subsequent transitions and changes in the course of fathers and children's life are associated with reduced parental resources (King and Sobolewski 2006; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Thomson et al. 1994) and the creation of stress that negatively affects the provision of parental care on the behalf of fathers (Degarmo and Forgatch, 1999).

From the one hand and from the perspective of the family system, divorce is defined as a stressful process with negative effects on the child's well-being (Amato, 2000), which can be offset through high support and high control (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010; Campana et al., 2008; Carlson 2006; Dunlop et al., 2001; King and Sobolewski 2006; Lansford 2009).

On the other hand, according to the theory of social capital (Coleman 1988), maintaining contact between the parent and the child is a necessary condition for the transfer of social capital, which exists in the relationship between the parent and the child, and both the quantity (i.e., contact) and the quality (i.e., parental care) of parental involvement have been measured (Furstenberg and Hughes 1995). According to the research by Bastais, Ponnet and Mortelmans (2012), fathers who did not have the custody were less supportive and exercised less control than fathers in nuclear families and those who exercised joint physical custody, a fact that may be due to in the reduction of parental resources after a divorce (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Thomson et al., 1994).

### **4. Self-esteem and parenting**

During childhood and adolescence, self-esteem lies in the close relationship with significant others, such as parents (Zakeri and Karimpour, 2011; Breivik and Olweus, 2006).

High levels of parental support have been found to be associated with higher self-esteem in adolescents (Bastaitis, Ponnet and Mortelmans, 2012; Birkeland et al, 2012) and secure attachment.

Mean differences in self-esteem in the Swedish study by Turunen, Fransson and Bergström (2017) produced non-significant results and therefore no generalizations could be established, proving that children in joint physical custody differed from those living in one parent families and those in nuclear families.

Furthermore, the parental control that fathers exercise is not significantly associated with children's self-esteem (Kakihara et al., 2010; Bastaitis, Ponnet and Mortelmans, 2012), since research has revealed contradictory results. In the study by Zakeri and Karimpour (2011) a positive relationship was found between parental control / support and children's self-esteem, whereas other researchers found a negative relationship (Plunkett et al. 2007; Siffert et al., 2012).

As far as the Greek survey carried out by Papanis (2004 - 2006) is concerned, there was no statistically significant difference in the average self-esteem of the general population and those of divorced parents, a fact that may have been due to the stronger adjustment and flexibility mechanisms that people with divorced parents had to develop. In addition, a differentiating factor in self-esteem was the form of divorce (separation or formal divorce) and the relationship between the parents later. In other words, drastic solutions seemed to be preferable to feedback on a relationship that has ended, thus perpetuating the conflicts and tensions that arise as a result of poor communication between spouses.

## **5. Research methodology**

### **5.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the present study is to investigate joint custody and paternal role after divorce or separation. More specifically, it was examined the way in which individuals' views on the father's parental role are formed after a divorce.

### **5.2 The Methodological Tool**

A quantitative questionnaire was developed, which incorporated a series of scales of views which, according to the theoretical framework, seem to shape individuals' attitudes towards the father's role after divorce. These scales were developed as 5-point Likert scales (with matching 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = have no opinion, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The results of the analysis of the collected data are shown below.

### **5.3 Characteristics of the Sample**

Data were collected from 2,638 people between January 2014 and December 2020. Regarding the demographic characteristics of the sample, they are as follows: In terms of gender, 27.6% are men, while the remaining 62.4% are women. In relation to marital status, 43.5% are single, 9.4% married without children, 20.7% married with children, 17.9% divorced, 7.6% divorced and 0.8% widowed. The average age of the participants in the research is 36.71 years. Finally, in terms of educational level, 0.2% are primary school graduates, 1.2% high school graduates, 16.2% high school graduates, 10.7% students, 49.2% holders of Vocational Education / Higher Education degrees and 22.5 % holders of a master's or doctoral degree

## 6. Statistical Data Analysis

The frequency distributions of the participants' views are presented in the Tables below. As far as the view that "the paternal role is more social than biological", most participants (57.2%) state that they disagree (Table 1).

**Table 1: The paternal role is more social than biological**

	Average
I Strongly disagree/I Disagree	57.2%
I have no opinion	4.3%
I agree/I strongly agree	38.5%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the view that "Children's custody after divorce should be entrusted to the mother, as is the case law to date", most participants (60.3%) state that they disagree, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Children's custody of children after divorce should be entrusted to the mother, as is the case law to date**

	Average
I Strongly disagree/I Disagree	60.3%
I have no opinion	8.4%
I agree/I strongly agree	31.2%
Total	100,0%

As far as the opinion that "The father should co-decide with the mother on child-rearing issues after divorce", the vast majority of participants (92.2%) say they agree, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: The father must co-decide with the mother on child-rearing issues after the divorce**

	Average
Strongly disagree/Disagree	3.6%
I have no opinion	1.2%
I agree/I strongly agree	92.2%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the view that "The status of simple communication between the father and the children, as determined by the case law, without the right to make decisions for their upbringing, should be maintained as it is", most of the participants (44.6%) state that they disagree, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: between the father and the children, as determined by the case law, without the right to make decisions for their upbringing, should be maintained as it is**

	Average
Strongly disagree/Disagree	44.6%
I have no opinion	24.3%
I agree/I strongly agree	31.1%
Total	100,0%

As far as the question: "Which are, you think, the dominant feelings and situations that the father experiences after the physical removal from home and the place of residence of his

children?" is concerned, most of the participants (30.1%) consider that the feeling of sadness prevails, followed by the feeling of failure, because the paternal role is canceled. The results are presented in detail in Table 5.

**Table 5: Which are, you think, the dominant feelings and situations that the father experiences after the physical removal from home and the place of residence of his children?**

	<b>Average</b>
Guilt	8.8%
Sadness	30.1%
Indifference	2.5%
Revenge	2.8%
Release from responsibilities	9.2%
Deterioration of quality of life	5.6%
Financial bleeding	3.8%
Feeling of failure because the paternal role is canceled	28.4%
Deterioration of self-esteem	4,0%
Other	4.7%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the view that "The state should enact laws on joint custody", most participants (86%) state that they agree, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: The state should enact laws on joint custody**

	<b>Average</b>
I strongly disagree/I disagree	7.5%
I have no opinion	6.5%
I agree/I strongly agree	86,0%
Total	100,0%

Concerning the view that "The resolution of parental disputes in a divorce should be done out of court through the institution of mediation, if it is also applicable to Greece", most participants (77.4%) state that they agree, as it seems in Table 7.

**Table 7: The resolution of parental disputes in a divorce should be done out of court through the institution of mediation, if it is also applicable to Greece**

	<b>Average</b>
I strongly disagree/I disagree	6.5%
I have no opinion	15.8%
I agree/I strongly agree	77.4%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the view that "The establishment of a family court should be established immediately, because the judicial system has neither the time nor the expertise to resolve family disputes", the majority of participants (87.4%) say they agree, as it seems in Table 8.

**Table 8: The establishment of a family court should be established, because the judicial system has neither the time nor the expertise to resolve family disputes**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	4,0%
I have no opinion	8.6%
I agree/I strongly agree	87.4%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the opinion that “Parents entering divorce and child custody process must visit specialized social services, since they cannot decide wisely themselves”, the vast majority of participants (92.2%) say they agree, as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Parents entering divorce and child custody process must visit specialized social services, as they cannot decide wisely themselves**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	3.8%
I have no opinion	4,0%
I agree/I strongly agree	92.2%
Total	100,0%

As far as the view that “Fathers usually use their children to blackmail or exploit their ex-wife” is concerned, the participants appear divided; 42% of participants say they disagree, while 35.9% say they agree.

**Table 10: Fathers often use their children to blackmail or exploit their ex-wife**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	42,0%
I have no opinion	22,0%
I agree/I strongly agree	35.9%
Total	100,0%

Concerning the view that “Mothers usually use their children to blackmail or exploit their ex-husband”, most of the participants (56.9%) say they agree, as shown in Table 11 below.

**Table 11: Mothers usually use their children to blackmail or exploit their ex-husband**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	23,0%
I have no opinion	20.1%
I agree/I strongly agree	56.9%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the view that “Alimony is unfair and should be amended by law”, most participants (44.6%) state that they agree, as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12: Alimony is unfair and should be amended by law**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	31.1%
I have no opinion	24.3%
I agree/I strongly agree	44.6%
Total	100,0%

Concerning the view that “The financial crisis and the inadequacy of the welfare state do not allow mothers who exercise custody mothers to raise their children properly”, most of the participants (72.7%) say they agree, as it seems in Table 13.

**Table 13: The financial crisis and the inadequacy of the welfare state do not allow mothers who exercise custody mothers to raise their children properly**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	16.2%
I have no opinion	11.2%
I agree/I strongly agree	72.7%
Total	100,0%

As far as the view that “the father is not as capable of taking care of the children as the mother is”, most participants (74.2%) state that they disagree, as shown in Table 14.

**Table 14: The father is not as capable of taking care of the children as the mother is**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	74.2%
I have no opinion	5.8%
I agree/I strongly agree	20,0%
Total	100,0%

Regarding the question: “How often do you think the father should communicate with the children after the divorce?” most participants (76.4%) state “Daily”, as shown in Table 15.

**Table 15: How often do you think the father should communicate with the children after the divorce?**

	Average
Daily	76.4%
3-4 times a week	17.7%
3-4 times a month	1.3%
Other	4.6%
Total	100,0%

Concerning the view that “Divorced fathers often fall victim to lawyers, about the expectations they may have regarding child custody”, most participants (45.7%) appear to have no opinion, as shown in Table 16.

**Table 16: Divorced fathers often fall victim to lawyers about their expectations of child custody**

	Average
I strongly disagree/I disagree	14.3%
I have no opinion	45.7%
I agree/I strongly agree	40,0%
Total	100,0%

## 7. Conclusions

The present study, which is still ongoing, is one of the first attempts to capture a phenomenon that has taken on enormous proportions with significant psychological, social and economic consequences, as it relates to the rapid increase in divorce in Greece and the development of new family formations.

Similar to research conducted in Europe and worldwide, there is an urgent need for the paternal role to be reviewed and his involvement in children's upbringing after separation or divorce to be expanded so that the well-being of both children and fathers themselves is promoted.

According to the results of the present study, it is a common request of both women and men to maintain the father's quality participation in the lives of children and the continued provision of high support and control, even after separation or divorce, for children's harmonious development.

Another key conclusion from the present study is the need to reorganize family law and upgrade the psychological and counseling services of the state in order to prevent disputes and a climate of conflict between parents, through the development of appropriate forms of communication and cultivation of their communication skills.

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## ART AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT: IMPORTANCE AND ROLE. CASE STUDY ON APPLIED ARTS IN ALGERIA

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**Abstract:** *This article was generated for the sake of illustrating the importance of art in society, its effective role in stimulating the capacities of research, thought, dialogue and innovative performance. Also, it aims at driving individuals to develop and regenerate lifestyles through the development of different means of art, which means that the arts affect individuals and societies in intentional and unintended ways. This is the highlighted purpose of art in general. The effects of the arts on individuals and societies are reflected in the characteristics and features of each society and the extent to which it is influenced by different types of art. Throughout this article we are going to try to illustrate the reality of applied arts in Algeria, which is still looking for recognition and interest in order to ensure that it takes its place and its role in economic development. This is far from the disposable oil revenues, by trying to address the reality of applied arts in the institutes and universities, as well as to clarify the interactive relationship between university graduates and labor market training institutes, namely, the public and private sectors.*

**Key words:** art; applied arts; education; development; interactive relationship.

### 1. What about Arts?

In his book *Art and Society*, which he translated into Arabic, Herbert Reid says that: « It is not the expression of religious or philosophical ideas, but the artist's ability to create a complex world which is coherent and proportional in itself, the creation of a world which is not of practical needs and desires, nor of dreams and fantasies, but a world that is composite between these two oppositions. » (Reid, 1985 :09). Art for Reid is a compelling necessity and enticing portrayal of the body of experience and thus a way of portraying the perception of one aspect of truth and reality. According to Guetzkow (2002), art has a kind of balance that eventually leads to a kind of integration into the human existence.

By tackling the same viewpoints, Joshua Guetzkow refers to the importance of art in the life of societies as an active and creative force: « Art has a great potential to strengthen social ties by creating a positive social atmosphere of interdependence and harmony». Artistic programs and events are an opportunity to forge new relationships and strengthen ties of love and trust between members of society, whether they are active participants in these events or merely spectators, as they feel prouder and part of their society. In this context, Joshua Guetzkow emphasizes the ability of art as an important factor in society by strengthening the structure of relationships between individuals, thus increasing their interdependence. (Guetzkow, 2002: 8)

In regard to artistic events, Joshua Guetzkow adds, "Artistic events of all kinds are a practical application of the experience of meaningful community-based partnership and the necessary organizational and coordination skills at the technical levels. Joshua Guetzkow, referring to the importance of art by emphasizing the importance of the good organization of

artistic events, which must be followed and reviewed by specialists in order to give a valued chance for the partnership process to take place in an effective manner.

In the process of promoting the values of beauty and creativity, art has a significant role to play, so that enjoying art and participating in programs to showcase the creative aspect of the arts creates a sense of appreciation for the values of beauty and creativity among members of society, and they develop a delicate and tasteful artistic sense of all what is characterized by the sense of fascinating beauty such as parks and green yards . (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012).

Art has an important role in deepening the senses of pride and self-esteem of individuals towards the history of their nation, the richness of their culture and the prestige of the cultural legacy, which they have left behind. Art is considered as an important means of education in history and as a product of different civilizations. If the human being has a clear and comprehensive vision of these matters, it has become more sensitive to his culture and more relevant to his past. Society has become a strong and coherent that is not easily shaken in the face of adversity, and that does not weaken any attempt to weaken or dismantle him. (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012).

Joshua Guetzkow emphasizes as well the role of art in improving people's living standard. In his views, art has a role in helping to revive the economic situation of the state, improve the living standard of its citizens, by creating new jobs, reducing the prevalence of unemployment in society, as well as supporting the tourism sector and attracting passionate tourists, who often stay longer and have the willingness and ability to spend more than others. (California arts council, 2019)

It is no longer hidden that art shaped for itself the position to be as an important pillar of economic strength. Also, as an influential component of the States' budgets and economic growth rates. The most notable evident example is the California State Survey Annual Reports, on which arts and crafts contributed about 7.8% of GDP, and the number of workers in such industries was estimated at 1.4 million, for a total profit of \$99.3 billion per year. (California arts council, 2019).

## **2. The important roles of arts**

Language skills:

- Increasing the willingness of students to learn to write and read by the dramatic representation of stories and novels. In addition to the fact that the study of the arts of drama affects the language abilities of the student positively.
- Art also helps to promote the understanding of mathematics. As a result, many recent studies show that music is associated with the development of logical skills, understanding the relationships between things.
- Art also contributes by improving the cognitive abilities. For example, visual arts and dance help in developing creative, thought and imaginative skills.
- Increasing the desire for learning, thus, arts in their different forms contribute in enhancing competition, the values of teamwork among students, and reduce the likelihood of them escaping a teacher. (Ruppert, 2006)

The economic importance of art

- Art contributes heavily in the growth of the economic sphere. Its importance lies in creating new jobs, increasing the labour force, which contributes significantly to the increase in GDP and the development of the State economy, for example; "Art revenue in California alone accounts for 7.8% of GDP. "

- Art plays an important role in supporting the tourism sector, where travelers for the sake of artistic purposes stay longer and at a higher rate of financial spending than other tourists. (California arts council, 2019).

*The psychological importance of art:* The process of engagement in the artistic work helps in reducing stress and anxiety, and improves the mood. In addition, working in all kinds of artistic sectors helps the employees to feel more self-esteem and satisfaction towards their ability of producing their work of art. (Guetzkow,2002)

*The social and cultural importance of art:* The ability of improving the living conditions of individuals, at the participation in various artistic activities help in strengthening the links and cohesion of society. (California arts council, 2019)

*The cultural importance of art:* The art's ability to promote a range of positive values in individuals, such as free expression of beliefs, increased tolerance and rejection of intolerance help in enhancing the individual's cultural sense.

In regards to the already-mentioned points concerning the importance of art, we are going to review the practical aspect of the study of the state in concerns with the reality of applied arts in Algeria and its role in economic development. In approaching this subject, we are not going to focus only in terms of the proceeds of defunct petroleum, but also in trying to address the reality of applied arts in the institutes and universities. In addition, to clarify the interactive relationship between university graduates and training institutes in the labor market either in the public or in the private sectors.

### **3. The applied arts: an overview**

Applied arts may include architecture, interior design, the design of manufactured items, ceramics, metalwork, jewelry, textile, glass, furniture, graphics, clocks and watches, toys, leather, arms and armor, and musical instruments, etc. Commercial art may be considered a branch of applied arts. The Applied Arts are usually contrasted with the Fine Arts (drawing, painting, sculpture, fine printmaking, etc.) (Chali-Rosson, 2014)

These forms date back to the time of the art classifications, which distinguished two opinions, one against the introduction of utility concepts from art, as noted by the American philosopher Irwin Edman: "The industrial arts are used to serve our purposes, and they're going. It's always about paying more attention than it is about beauty" (Bakhit, 2011:58). In this regard, Kant has an important view on which he points a distinction between art and profession: "art is a free automatic activity, whereas the profession is a salaried industry which is beneficial and purposeful." (Bakhit, 2011: 58)

In the opposite side, there is the fact that the utilitarian functions are almost disconnected from the absorptive functions. Here, it is recalled that the connection between utility and beauty has existed since the Greek era. In Socrates' view: "all useful things are beautiful and good, as long as they are considered as usable subjects." (Bakhit A.S, 2011:61)

The distinction between the applied and the fine arts did not emerge strongly until the time of the Industrial Revolution (1775-1875). (Sharma, 2011: 09)

### **What about the applied arts' teaching in Algeria**

In Algeria, the retainer of applied arts' education is based on the vocational training system, which is specialized in many traditional trades and industries. It should be noted that most of those in these institutions do not have a baccalaureate degree, but we believe that they are subject to a good applied composition.

A widespread problem, which is usually facing the university's graduate, lies in the fact that most of the employers are always looking for skilled graduates who are well trained in the applied arts. But the belief that the aesthetic studies adopted by many applied arts industries

are largely absent in vocational training centres, which is ultimately reflected in the quality of the product.

Unfortunately, there is no institute or polytechnic college in Algeria which take the responsibility of organizing well-qualified research laboratories, academics and researchers. In addition to the lack of coordination among the various sectors, the higher education sector, the labour sector and the economical one. In addition, graduates of some fine arts schools, which have few applied arts activities, are covering their skills in isolation, owing to the fact that their degree has not been widely adopted by public officials (Fani, 2017). Attention must be given also to the fact of the lack of a strong curriculum for art education and the lack of studies from doctoral notes and scientific articles.

#### **4. Applied arts situation regarding societal development: the Algerian case**

##### **4.1. The reality of Algerian traditional crafts and industries:**

The traditional industry sector represents a cultural and social face and an economy where it has contributed to conservation. We can consider heritage and the preservation of tradition as a linking connection to the past and also as an attachment to authenticity. The Algerian traditional legacy represents a multiple and varied cultural heritage. The latter is drawn back to the succession of several civilizations and cultures to rule this country.

Nowadays, Algeria is heavily dependent on the fuel sector through the export of petroleum, so that the Algerian economy is 80% dependent on the manufacturing industry resulting from the conversion of petroleum which led the Algerian economy to fluctuate prices of oil in the international market. Thus, this situation did not stabilize the economy, which is an important factor in the development, due to inadequate attention to other sectors such as tourism, services and investment in modern technologies. Also, the traditional trades and manufacturing sector still suffers from many problems that prevent it from playing an effective role in the process of development.

##### **4.2. The Algerian legislature and the laws governing the trades sector and the oligarchic manufacturing:**

The sector of traditional manufacturing and crafts in Algeria was defined by order No. 96-01 of 10-01-1996 (Ben Zidane, and Ben Nasser, 2019;04) , which sets out the rules governing traditional manufacturing, crafts and their applicable texts, so that: "Article 5 stipulates that: the traditional manufacturing and crafts shall be any activity of production, creation, conversion, artistic restoration, maintenance, repair or performance of a service which is dominated by manual labour." (Ben Zidane, and Ben Nasser, 2019;04). In addition, the Algerian law has divided the traditional trades and manufacturing sector as: (Abdeljabbar and Hadji, 2016: 49)

- traditional manufacturing and the artistic traditional manufacturing;
- craft manufacturing for materials production;
- traditional service craft.

The above-mentioned laws were accompanied with other laws enacted by the Algerian legislature in order to regulate and facilitate the activity of traditional industries and crafts.

##### **4.3. The importance of traditional crafts and manufacturing in the local development:**

Traditional manufacturing is considered as an aesthetic art and a cultural heritage with many economic and cultural dimensions which have contributions to the local development, including:

- Reviving the ancestral heritage, preserving the memory of the past and working for its continuity in keeping with the spirit of the times, as well as developing the talents of craftsmen and demonstrating their creativity and skills.
- Contributing to efforts in order to reduce the economic dependence.
- The policy of self-reliance is reflected at the local level, where traditional industries and crafts rely on the mobilization of local potential and resources.
- Contributing to the local development, the stabilization of society and the balance of activities between the rural and urban surroundings.
- Upgrading of institutes, universities and research centres through continuous research on product development and improvement.
- The contribution of traditional crafts and industries in the development of tourism through the promotion of movable products and artefacts. (Abdeljabbar and Hadji, 2016: 51)
- Contributing in the improvement of the country's wide image, particularly after the period of terrorism, which Algeria experienced in the 1990s, through the cultural diversity, which carried by these artisan products.
- "In addition to the great capacity of an industry of traditional crafts and manufacturing to absorb unemployment, this sector is considered as a requirement for society because it facilitates the acquisition of basic and daily items. It is indispensable in the various vocabulary of daily life. Thus, upgrading it by improving the quality of the product or service is an improvement in the level of respect for the consumer and its taste." (Ben Siddiqui, 2013: 13).

#### **4.4. Some important remark:**

Unfortunately, despite all the legislation and laws, but they were not enough. The sector is suffering from many delays owing to the failure to implement these laws well and to the lack of development of centres for the education of traditional crafts and industries. In terms of the contribution of trades and industries to national income outside the petroleum sector.

In most of the cases "The traditional manufacturing exports did not exceed the amount of 1,168 million \$, which is a very low if not neglected; We can therefore say that the development in exports of traditional industry remains far from the potential of the sector and its ability to bring hard currency into the national economy, thus contributing effectively to economic development (Abdeljabbar and Hadji, 2016: 53). This reason is due to a number of problems, the most important of which we mention in the following:

#### **5. Problems and Obstacles of the Development of the Craft, Arts Sector and Traditional manufacturing:**

The existence of many laws does not necessarily enough, since "there is a lack of clear legislation to regulate work and develop, as well as fewer specialized institutes and specialists with higher degrees in traditional manufacturing and crafts and the traditional practice of crafts" (Abdeljabbar and Hadji, 2016: 53).

In addition, the role of modern technologies and technologies in the process of production has been overlooked. The latter has helped foreign products to replace domestic products - Chinese products, for example - without forgetting to mention the inferiority of craftsmen which led to the reluctance of new generations to practice this activity and to deny it due to ignorance of the importance of traditional industry and its products from its cultural and economic aspects, as well as «the weakness of craftsmen in the field of controlling modern technologies (Benzarour, 2009: 33).

We have also to mention the "low level of the working conditions, working environment, health and social care for workers, as well as the difficulty of obtaining shops for the exercise of the profession and the equipment necessary for the production process, as well as the problems of supply with raw materials and difficulties in providing them at acceptable quality and prices." (Abdeljabbar and Hadji, 2016: 53)

The dearth of research, documentation and registration of traditional occupations and industries has led to the absence of a database on these trades and industries. We also note that some officials predominate in their own interests. This has led the sector to slow progress, despite the good will of the Algerian State's decision-makers to develop the country.

### **The Algerian consumer and product acquisition dialectic!**

In Algeria, the collectors of traditional crafts and industries tend to acquire these transferred artifacts for their functional side, without taking into account other aspects, either the aesthetic aspect or the quality of the material from which these artifacts were made. And the Algerian consumer necessarily goes to buy imported products which are cheap.

In the Algerian house, you will be surprised to notice that most of the items of the house are imported from the very smallest things, like ornaments, vases and glasses, to the largest ones, like the closet. Most of those items are imported from China, Turkey or Spain, so the house and the environment and surroundings on which we are living in has lost their original local identity. Several other factors interfere with the policy of Algerian acquisition of these products. One of these factors is the cultural factor which is considered as a central fact regarding to this process. The importance of the cultural factor lies in the fact that culture in one of its broad definitions is defined as: "It is a compound of knowledge, beliefs, the arts, ethics, laws, customs and values." (Ben Aissa, 2003)

This subject - the commodity and the consumer - also brings us to another very important and relevant point in the arts: the relationship of aesthetic to the career, in which many, including the American architect Sullivan, spoke: "We are no longer arguing about the priority of both form and function over each other. We cannot ignore each other's dependence." Whereas Sullivan's definition explains that it is a power which wants to express itself: life and soul, that functions are looking for their shapes and that the shapes are the external appearance of internal forces and needs, functions and forms are all interrelated." (Mamdouh, and Hossamuddin, 2010: 04).

This important subject which is the relationship of receiving and realizing creative products must be given the greatest importance through studies of researchers and specialists, so that through the results of these studies we can start in order to better solve the problem of receiving works and crafts of high aesthetic and functional value, including the establishment of a culture of conscious consumption of works of art in a way that is free from temperament, also, the attempt to promote those products as a resource of wealth away from viable wealth on which Algeria depends such as petroleum, gas and phosphate.

### **6. Conclusion**

To sum up, it is clearly noticed from the above-mentioned points that the handicraft and traditional industries sector suffers from many problems. This is negatively due to the convictions of the Algerian consumer convictions. The lack of quality of the polytechnic product is considered as a barrier to acquisition and development. This represents the reason behind the process of acquiring imported products by the Algerians.

Due to the lack of a clear plan, either at universities or institutes or even at the level of sectors which have a bearing on this subject, such as the Ministry of Higher Education and Work. As a result, in Algeria, applied arts have not contributed significantly to the development process, despite Algeria's natural and financial potential. Thus, we are recommending making the following points applicable:

- Trying to stimulate studies related to arts and make them as a development factor.
- Establishing institutes and centres, which are specialized in the field of applied arts. In addition to making an attempt in order to integrate university graduates, especially those from fine arts schools and regional schools of art, into institutes specialized in crafts and traditional industries

- Making a real attempt of signing agreements between the labour sector and the Ministry of Higher Education for the practical field training of university students. Thus, university graduates will benefit from good chances when applying for a job.
- Working on continuous training for students of vocational training institutes through lectures and scientific forums, which must have special supervision by university graduates' specialists. This is because practitioners of crafts and traditional industries who do not have university degrees also suffer from other problems, the most important of which is the failure to develop their products, which leads to their inability to resist the import of imported products.
- The necessity to include arts and crafts programs in all the educational levels.
- The necessity to establish specialized centres for the follow-up processes in order to develop the handicraft and traditional industries sector. The latter can be achieved by establishing regional centres: East - West - Central - North - South.
- Continuously renewing laws and legislations, establishing a digital database for the crafts, and applied arts sector.

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## HARNESSING THE POTENTIALS OF ALMAJIRI COHORTS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *The Almajiri system over the years has been linked indirectly with radicalization, unemployment and other social vices in Nigeria. This negates the initial ideals of the system as introduced a long time ago. This study focused on harnessing the potentials of Almajiri cohorts for entrepreneurship development. The study was conducted in two states in the northern part of Nigeria using focus group discussion. The findings reveal that the Almajiri system is undesirable as majority of discussants were tired of the system. The findings also show that a lot of the cohorts have entrepreneurship potentials in them. Therefore, the study recommends that government of states involved should make concerted efforts to equip the cohorts with entrepreneurship skills and values in order to harness entrepreneurship potentials in them.*

**Key words:** Almajiri cohorts; entrepreneurship development; potentials; culture; system.

### 1. Introduction

A lot of literatures exist on the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria. An examination of some of the literatures indicate different narratives on the origin, purpose and desirability of the system. For instance, Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling, Purefoy (2012); and Soyinka (2012) noted that the Almajiri system in itself serve as an instrument of radicalization. Hoechner (2013); Higazi (2013); and Omeni (2015) observed a flawed link between Almajiri system and violence. Falola (2009); Danjibo (2009) argued that the economic destitution of the Almajiris render them vulnerable to radicalization and accordingly culpable of fierce rebellion. Usman, Zawayah & Bashir (2017) posited that the Almajiri system in itself does not radicalized the Almajiri cohorts but it has indirectly contributed in producing large jobless youth cohorts with a strong sense of identity. In view of Usman et al (2017) study and the need to ensure that youths are gainfully employed, this study focused on harnessing the potentials of Almajiris for entrepreneurship development with a view of combating joblessness among youths and curbing the challenge of insecurity most especially in the northern part of Nigeria. Almajiri as used in Hausa language (singular) is derived from an Arabic word "Al-muhajirun" (plural) meaning migrants or "Al-mahajir" a pilgrim or wanderer (Mohammed & Yusuf, 2015). It is a name given to migrants who seeks Quranic knowledge. Almajiri refers to children aged 4-18 years among others who leave their families in the pursuit of Islamic education particularly in northern Nigeria and some parts of West Africa (Bambale, 2003; Adamu, 2010; Al- Gazali, 2012). It must be noted that some group of individuals now move from one street to another with plates in their hand begging for food early in the morning and in the evening under the guise of Almajiri without genuine interest in Islamic education or affiliation to a non-formal Islamic school.

## 2. Statement of Problem

The Almajiri system really calls for concern as able bodied youths between the ages of 10 -18 years that subscribe to this system are found roaming about daily begging for food from house to house. They knock at people's gate, chanting and reciting verses to persuade residents to come to their aid. These Boys are not registered in any formal school and they are not learning any trade. One then wonders what becomes of them when they grow older without a skill, formal education or trade. A number of studies suggested that they become tools in the hands of unscrupulous elements who recruit them easily into terrorist organizations, luring them with money and other promises. It is therefore necessary to explore the possibilities of harnessing the potentials of these youths for entrepreneurship development.

## 3. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study is to explore the possibilities of harnessing the potentials of Almajiris for entrepreneurship development. Other specific objectives are to:

1. examine the opinion of Almajiri cohorts on the desirability of the system
2. identify the potentials inherent in the Almajiri cohorts.
3. highlight entrepreneurship opportunities available for Almajiris

## 4. Entrepreneurship Development and Culture

Entrepreneurship development entails the process of improving the skills and knowledge of *people with business ideas and potentials* through various entrepreneurial trainings and programs. Entrepreneurship development is concerned with entrepreneurial behavior, the dynamics of business set-up, development and expansion of the enterprise. Entrepreneurship development (ED) refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building program (UNDP, 1999). It basically aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created. This accelerates employment generation and economic development. Anthropologists view entrepreneurship as well as other social processes as cultural processes (Greenfield and Strickon, 1986). In particular, the important role of culture, norms and traditions has been demonstrated, which, although do not inhibit entrepreneurship, but can do so. From an anthropological perspective, attention to social and cultural factors related to the creation of a new business has provided interesting contributions to the understanding of entrepreneurship.

According to Morris (2005), there is a major difference in cultural values and norms across various cultures which influence entrepreneurial activity and behavior. Hence, entrepreneurial activities which may be appealing to Almajiri cohorts domiciled in the northern part of Nigeria may be different from entrepreneurial activities that may be of interest to a person domiciled in the southern part of Nigeria due to cultural differences. Mueller (2000) noted that culture includes patterns of values, ideas and symbolic features which shape the human behavior and it is the process that distinguishes one group from another through a system of values. Cultural values are the essential elements that influences entrepreneurship behaviors of people in a society (Turker and Selcuk, 2009). Culture is a scaffold through which individuals can shape their behavior as well as entrepreneurial activities in society; its influence on entrepreneurship development cannot be overemphasized. Culture provides support to deal with day to day issues that confronts entrepreneur (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Culture encompasses social norms; these social norms in line with Ijaz et al. (2012) is the unrecorded rules of conduct of a group which impact the individual-level decision-making process. It must be noted that the Almajiri system practiced in Nigeria is cultural and peculiar to the North. Hence, cultural dimension to entrepreneurship development cannot be overemphasized.

## 5. Theoretical Orientation

Social identity theory is applicable to how Amajiri cohorts see themselves. The Social Identity Theory (SIT) posited that our definition of who we are; is a function of our similarities and differences with others. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986), social identity theory attempts to explain intergroup solidarity and discrimination which favors in-group that people belonged and contrary to the other group. In other words, cognitive processes define the membership of a group through social categorization, social identification and comparison. This can be understood in the sense that the Almajiris have a shared belief, solidarity and modus operandi which distinguish them from other groups. Ellemers & Haslam (2012) observed that social identity theory is a "grand" theory whose core premise is that in many social situations, people think of themselves and others as group members, rather than as unique individuals. This is true in the light of the Almajiri cohorts who see themselves as members of a group with specific roles to play.

The theory argues that social identity underpins intergroup behavior and sees this as qualitatively distinct from interpersonal behavior. It delineates the circumstances under which social identities are likely to become important, so that they become the primary determinant of social perceptions and social behaviors. The theory also specifies different strategies people employ to cope with a devalued social identity. This largely explains the continued existence of the Almajiri system in spite of efforts to re-orientate the cohorts in line with modern standards of acceptable behavior. It is indeed necessary to explore ways of channeling the enormous potentials of the Almajiris for entrepreneurship development so as to ensure an egalitarian society devoid of young street beggars.

## 6. Methodology

This study is purely descriptive as it adopts a qualitative method to elicit information from respondents. The respondents are basically Almajiri cohorts selected purposively from different locations in two major states in the northern part of Nigeria. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to harvest the opinion of the Almajiri cohorts on different issues of interest. The Almajiris always walk together in groups. So, it was easy to get between 6 - 8 persons for discussion at the same time. The purpose of the study was explained to them before the commencement of discussion. Light refreshments was provided to gain their attention because most of them were approached for discussion while they were moving from one house to another begging for food. Services of research assistants who are well versed in Hausa language were secured to give room for effective communication. The identity of discussants as well as their locations were not disclosed for security reasons due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Focus group discussion with participants were recorded, transcribed and rearranged. The main ideas were reviewed to identify comments which occur more than once. Intelligent transcription was used to present the salient comments.

## 7. Discussion of Findings

Information elicited from respondents goes a long way in unravelling the opinion of Almajiri cohorts about their current situation and way of life. In response to questions on the desirability of the Almajiri system. Some of the cohorts stated as follows:

*"It is good and desirable; I don't really see anything wrong in what I'm doing, I am not stealing or taking what does not belong to me. I only beg for food without forcing anyone"*  
**(Discussant 1, Location C)**

*"I am not happy with this daily routine of begging for food in the morning and at night. I really wish I could have another option. It is undesirable to me".* **(Discussant 6, Location A)**

*"I am tired of this kind of lifestyle, sometimes I go hungry for a whole day without food. It is painful that people have food at home but they are not willing to help us. The system is undesirable for me". (Discussant 8, Location D)*

*"I have no desire for begging this same way every day. Sometimes, people do give us stale food. The type of food they cannot give their children. But sometimes, we could be lucky to get fresh and good foods from kind hearted individuals. It is undesirable". (Discussant 2, Location B)*

*"There is nothing to be happy about as far as I'm concerned. Our master would ask us to look for food. We move from place to place asking people to give us food in the name of God. Sometimes, we get small quantity of food and may have to struggle and fight among ourselves to get a portion of the food. I am tired of this; it is undesirable". (Discussant 5, Location D)*

*"It is desirable, I have no other option, I have to do what my friends are doing. We go to a Beans cake seller or cooked rice seller's shop early in the morning to beg for food. They are always kind enough to give us food. Sometimes, their customers' may buy food for us". (Discussant 2, Location A)*

The response of majority of the Almajiri cohorts as stated above indicated that the system is not desirable for the cohorts and some of them are tired of the lifestyle that the scheme has to offer. However, there are a number of the cohorts that loves the system as they have no other alternative to the way of life offered by Almajiri system.

In a bid to identify the potentials inherent in the Almajiri cohorts, discussants noted that they are capable of doing a lot of things. Some of them are interested in business (buying and selling), some of them have good artistic skills. In fact, one of them was able to produce a free-hand portrait of one of the research assistants. Some of the young boys are interested in carpentry, tailoring, motorcycle and car mechanic among others. Some extracts from the discussion is as follow:

*"I am good at repairing things most especially toys and other household equipment picked from the refuse dump". (Discussant 3, Location D)*

*"For me, I like drawing. I can draw anything I see or imagine. Please give me a paper and I will draw an image that look so much like you". (Discussant 7, Location A)*

*"I will like to be a Business man selling Rice and Beans. I will make a lot of money and I will help people that are poor". (Discussant 5, Location C)*

*"I always admire Bricklayers that build houses. I really wish to be like them. I would love to build fine houses for people". (Discussant 2, Location B)*

*"I love cars and I would like to be a mechanic. I once built a toy car with wood and other things. I wish to repair cars for people and if it is possible. I will be happy to build my own car". (Discussant 8, Location A)*

It is interesting to note that most of the cohorts have great potentials and lofty dreams. However, these potentials may not be achieved if policy makers failed to take necessary steps in assisting and managing these young talented boys for the good of the society. So many entrepreneurship opportunities are available for the Almajiri cohorts. These includes the following among others:

- Carpentry/ Furniture work
- Tailoring / Fashion Design
- Painting/ Art work
- Bricklaying
- Mechanic
- Electrical Technician

- Business management (Buying and Selling)
- General Sales and Distribution

### 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The level of insecurity in Nigeria most especially in the north calls for concerted efforts. Jobless individuals are easily conscripted by people with criminal intentions to perpetrate nefarious activities. In view of this, it is necessary to harness the potentials of the Almajiris for entrepreneurship development in order to ensure that peace, orderliness and harmony reigns in the society. It is equally important to ensure that appropriate skills and trainings are provided for the Almajiri cohort in order to make them useful for themselves and for the society.

Government of affected states in the northern part of Nigeria should make policies targeted at training Almajiri cohorts to be self-dependent. Deliberate steps should be taken to equip them with entrepreneurship skills and values with a view of harnessing their potentials appropriately.

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# SPEAKING BACK BY STORYTELLING – A METHOD FOR INCREASING CRITICAL THINKING AND ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *Storytelling and speaking back are two valuable methods in community development. In sociology, storytelling is applicable in three main forms: to collect data in narrative research, to present research results based on qualitative data and to stimulate people's engagement in social interventions meant to produce social change. Speaking back is a method that consists in involving participants in the process of reviewing their own productions, and then reflecting on their work; it is also used for returning research results in community in order to increase awareness and motivation for change in stakeholders and citizens. In this paper I present the main results of a research based on the combination of the two methods. I show how I used the descriptive style of storytelling in analysing and processing students' essays about their local communities and how I conducted a group thinking session based on the speaking back method. I conclude by highlighting that speaking back by storytelling could be an important tool for increasing critical thinking and reflection on the needs and resources for social change in local communities.*

**Key words:** storytelling; speaking back; critical thinking; community development; local community.

## 1. Introduction

Storytelling is an increasingly valuable method in qualitative sociology. It can be used both for collecting data and for presenting research results. More recently, storytelling has been used as a tool in producing social change and community development, starting from the idea that stories can play an important role in informing, raising awareness and educating the public about global challenges related to sustainable development.

Another highly valuable participative method in contemporary approaches and programs of social development consists of returning the research results back to the community and discussing them with community members. It is called *speaking-back* (Mitchell, De Lange and Moletsane, 2017) or *restitution of results* to community (Pascaru and Buțiu, 2007).

Community development is a process whose main goal is to bring more well-being into our lives, within the communities we belong to. This process consists of practices and models of local intervention that tend to have as main result a *better community*, through the participation of community members themselves (Sandu, 2005). Storytelling and speaking back methods are generally used separately in this process.

In this paper I present the results of a research that I conducted two years ago at a seminar of Community Development, by combining the two methods mentioned above. Starting from this research I then point out that *speaking back by storytelling* could be an important tool for increasing critical thinking and reflection on the needs and resources for positive social change in local communities.

## 2. Storytelling and speaking back as tools for increasing critical thinking and engagement in local communities

In a very simple definition, *storytelling* is the process of telling a story. Stories and storytellers have always existed, as universal elements of culture. Human beings are "storytelling animals" Gottschall (2019) and stories have many essential functions for social life,

contributing to education, social cohesion, transmission of cultural values, entertainment, etc. Berger and Quinney (2004) argue that the main role of stories is to "secure us, raise our consciousness, and expand the reality of our experiences" (p. 8). Stories therefore have both a cognitive and emotional function: in general, when people tell stories about themselves or about others, they feel better and strengthen their social self (Atkinson, 2006).

Stories are embedded in our DNA, and storytelling is a social phenomenon receiving interest from researchers in many sciences, like psychology, sociology, marketing, tourism and behavioural science (Moin, Hosany and O'Brien, 2020). According to Harvey (2013), storytelling is a process that includes a three-way relationship among the teller, the story and the audience. In this triangle, "stories are always mediated through a storyteller and exist in relation to an audience" (p. 11). In sociology, this triadic relationship changes depending on the way stories are used. For example, in narrative research the audience is represented by researchers who collect stories, which in turn can reconstruct social reality in the form of stories addressed to academic public (students, other researchers, etc.). In social interventions meant to produce positive change in communities or organizations, the researcher or trainer presents relevant stories to influence certain categories of public (community members, local authorities, employees of a company, etc.)

Storytelling is used nowadays in many fields. In business and organizational communication, compelling stories can be distributed in a written form or verbally through in-person presentations, in order to persuade people to act in certain ways (Boldsova, 2020). Stories are widely used in marketing, where they "sell" products or services. They are also used in psychology, because stories can produce empowerment and positive change in people's lives (Burns, 2012). In education, stories are frequently used as a way to facilitate learning processes (Atkinson, 2006). In the field of local energy policy, storytelling allows stakeholders to understand the others' perspectives and to shape approaches and visions according to different local contexts; thus, storytelling is an innovative and flexible methodology and, in the same time, a valuable tool for policymakers (Mourik, Sonetti and Robison, 2021).

In sociology, storytelling has a triple meaning. It can be used 1) as a technique for collecting data in narrative research, 2) as a technique for presenting research results based on qualitative data and 3) as a stimulus in social interventions meant to produce social change (Csesznek and Coman, 2020). In the first case, qualitative data collected in the field research could have narrative forms: interviews, personal documents, conversations (Silverman, 2004) or, more recently, digital stories (Cersosimo, 2019) and visual stories such as photo-reportage or photo-novella (Purcell, 2007), which tell a story in images. In the second case, the research results are written in the form of a story that describes a social world (Scârnci, 2007); compiling a storytelling of this type involves careful reading of the collected data, processing data by thematic coding, selecting representative ideas, and harmonizing the chosen texts/ideas to give the impression of a unitary story told with the voice of the subjects themselves. It is also called the *descriptive style* of storytelling (Denzin, 1998 apud Scârnci, 2007). Finally, in the third case, recent studies have suggested that stories are very important in informing, raising awareness and educating the public about issues such as global climate challenges, environmental protection and sustainable development. Discussing the role of storytelling in climate change and energy research, Moezzi, Janda and Rotmann (2017) show that stories are used as a means of communication, "to influence and engage the audience" (p. 1).

Referring now to *speaking back*, this is a method that involves "a range of deliberate practices that have resulted in participants revisiting their own [...] productions, reflecting on their work, often changing their minds, and productively challenging and contradicting themselves" (Mitchell, De Lange and Moletsane, 2017: 49). These authors discuss the speaking back method in relation to the visual data produced by the participants in the field research. It can be also used in other types of research that return the results of scientific research in the

community, in languages which are accessible to community members; it is called, in recent literature, "restitution of results" and is seen as an important community development strategy (Pascaru and Buțiu, 2007).

The speaking back method can be applied in workshops coordinated by researchers or trainers, where community members involved in data collection participate in order to present their own perceptions and opinions about the research results. This method has been successfully used in various studies based on visual data (Mitchell and De Lange, 2011; Mitchell, De Lange and Moletsane, 2017). Within these activities the coordinators create contexts for stimulating the engagement of the participants in conversations, discussions, reflexive thinking or reflexive writing.

Restitution of results is "the act by which the researcher shares with their interlocutors in the field, for ethical or heuristic purposes, the provisional and/or final results of the processing of the collected data" (Bergier, 2000 apud Pascaru and Buțiu, 2007: 10). The benefits of such a process are emphasized by Mitchell and De Lange (2011): "The participants clearly highlighted the importance and the need for their own engagement in the process"; moreover, their feedback confirms "the agency of the participants in bringing out into the open 'what is hidden' in their [...] community and what is not talked about or addressed. However, it also affirms the possibility of meaningful participation" (p. 178)

I consider that both methods discussed above have the potential to increase reflection and critical thinking in community members who want to get involved in community actions aimed at contributing to community development. I will further support this statement with an illustration from my own research experience.

### 3. Methodology

Two years ago, in a seminar of Community Development, I applied the two methods in my work with students in undergraduate programs of Sociology and Social Work. It was an optional activity in which 23 students participated. This activity was divided into two group sessions. In the first one, the students' task was to write a short essay (between 150 and 500 words) about how they perceived their local communities, those where they had their main residence, highlighting both the aspects they considered positive and the negative ones. At the end of this session, I collected the essays and then, during the next week, I processed them according to the open and selective coding techniques; afterwards I wrote three stories or descriptive compositions, following the instructions for the *descriptive style* mentioned above. I chose to create three compositions because the students came from three main types of local communities: large urban communities (cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants - 5 students), small or medium urban communities (towns with a population between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants - 12 students) and rural communities (less than 10,000 inhabitants - 6 students). The type of locality was the only criterion according to which I analyzed the research data. The essays were anonymous and students participated voluntarily in this research.

In the second session, a week after the first, I made a short presentation about what storytelling is and how it can be used as a technique for presenting research results in qualitative sociology. I read then the three stories, one by one, asking the participants to make any comments and observations they wished. Practically, during this second group session I used the *speaking back* method and I wrote down all the comments made by the students. As I will highlight below, the participants had a strong positive attitude towards the use of storytelling and speaking back as methods for raising awareness about local issues and for increasing critical thinking and motivation for change in local communities.

#### **4. Students as storytellers and critics of their local communities living conditions. The results came back in the form of storytelling**

I will present below the three stories I wrote based on the qualitative analysis of the participants' essays, then I will show what their main reactions and comments on *speaking back by storytelling* method were.

##### **Story 1: Perception of the large urban community**

*The city where I live is a rapidly growing community that has many opportunities for all ages. It is a vivid community, constantly moving and changing. Many people in my city know how to appreciate it and enjoy the benefits it offers. They are inventive, creative and proud of their local identity. Our city is a magnet for business development and for tourists. It has a very beautiful nature, an extremely interesting and attractive old centre, but also new facilities for residents, such as shopping malls, gyms, restaurants and other places of leisure. New neighbourhoods are developing, where the blocks are no longer built in communist style, but they are very modern and comfortable. The population is growing because more and more young people are moving here. Many of my colleagues from other localities say they will move here after graduation. We rely on mutual respect and do not hesitate to offer it to those who visit us. Because there are many things to visit and do, many tourists come, which is very good, but in the summer and during the ski season, the city and its surroundings are overcrowded. There are some historical places that are not well-valued, sometimes being even closed, such as the medieval fortress on the hill, where, for instance, different types of events for young people could be organized.*

*The city has a lot of industry and is therefore very polluted. Of course, the industry is not a bad thing in itself, but I think more should be invested in reducing industrial pollution. In addition, the population is growing and, with it, the number of cars is increasing. Almost every family nowadays has a car and, during the rush hours, one can notice that most of the cars in traffic have only one person, so the city becomes very crowded and polluted. I think the green areas in the city are far too few. And sometimes you can see garbage thrown in the streets, especially paper and plastic objects. Many neighbourhoods have ugly blocks of flats, those built under communism, but now they have begun to be renovated and seem to look better.*

##### **Story 2: Perception of the small/medium town**

*I live in a small town, quiet and quite clean, which gives me a feeling of well-being. A very pleasant thing in my community is that we have beautiful landscapes, the forest close-by and also fresh air and a lot of relaxation, through walks in the open air. Being surrounded by mountains and nature, it creates a pleasant living environment for the inhabitants. There is easy access to various walking trails and other places of recreation. There are many flowers and also many benches in the town, so you can take a sit when you are tired. That is why my town is welcoming, both for its inhabitants and for those who come to visit us. Although a few years ago the appearance of the town was rather one of degradation, now the officials have managed to give a completely new face to the community. The town centre has been renovated and various shops and restaurants have been opened, which offer both residents and tourists many places to visit and spend their free time. The town hall is also involved in school sports activities and sponsors various community programs. Tourism is developing a lot in my local community and its surroundings. The town has amazing tourist development opportunities. Guest houses and holiday homes are being built, and I think the fact that tourists are coming is a good thing because they make our town known around the world. There are also some traditions, around which beautiful cultural events are created, especially on the eve of the winter holidays. People in my town are very friendly; we know each other and have a lot of communication. People are supportive and offer help to others whenever required. Where we have more ethnic groups, there is good communication and diversity is generally respected. I really feel safe in my community, from a social point of view.*

*There are also many problems and negative aspects. The town has a rather aging population. Quite rarely one can see young people in the street. There are not many employment opportunities, as there are very few jobs. Most likely, you can choose between working in a bank or in a store. Wages are quite low, and consumer products, especially food, are expensive. It is an expensive place in terms of wages. It sometimes seems to me that resources are used where they are not needed, investments are made in half and money and materials are wasted because of the bureaucracy and pride of the people in charge. Instead, they invest in things that we don't really need, such as all kinds of events and commemorations that distract from what is important to do and develop in our local community. Thus, change is difficult or not-existent. The town also has a rather poor infrastructure. There is no asphalt on all streets and there are not enough parking places. There is not much emphasis on repairing and rebuilding streets and roads. I think it is also a problem with the new blocks of flats that are being built on spaces where massive deforestation has taken place. Public transport is not very comfortable either. Buses are not very clean and some of them are old and too small. There are also problems with the medical system. Even if we have a hospital, for certain emergencies ambulances arrive late, sometimes after 20-30 minutes. In the hospital the elevator is very old and many wards are closed because doctors have gone to other cities. In addition, the town is not always very clean. You can often see garbage thrown by tourists and inhabitants, especially in the disreputable neighbourhoods, which are not a reason for pride for us. Unfortunately, children and young people have few interesting activities to do in town. There are no free centres where they could do craft, music, art education, technology or computer courses. There are not enough playgrounds for children either, instead there are at least four sports betting agencies. For young people, the lack of places to go out in the evening and the quite non-existent nightlife make living in the town boring.*

### **Story 3: Perception of the rural community (commune or village)**

*The commune where I live has many advantages for its inhabitants: there is no high pollution, people generally consume food produced in the household, which is better quality than those in stores, people know and help each other on many occasions. I even noticed that people in my community help each other when they have a need in the household or if they have financial difficulties. Living there gives me a sense of security. The community is united, with hardworking people. Houses and courtyards are thriving. We have a school and a kindergarten, and children do not have to travel too many kilometres to reach them. A very good thing is that we have a much cleaner air than in the city and many beautiful landscapes. Recently we have also got a drinking water network, a sewerage system and asphalt. Moreover, the commune is becoming more and more attractive for tourists, also because it is located in a very beautiful area. Guest houses and leisure areas have started to be built for tourists who prefer nature and rural tourism. Another important thing is that houses are being renovated and European funds are being attracted for agricultural and service development projects. Sometimes there are also volunteer actions, such as an action in which I also participated, to plant trees in a place where massive deforestation had taken place. Because many old people live in the commune, a positive aspect is that the tradition is still preserved during the holidays. Another positive thing is that buses have been introduced for people who commute to work in nearby towns.*

*If I were a local authority, I would persuade people to give more importance to street cleaning and environmental protection. This is because people still do not respect the rules of environmental protection, such as waste management or street cleaning. As there are many domestic animals in the households and many of them, like cows and sheep, go to graze to the fields, it is possible to find streets dirty with biological waste. Although a sewer system has been built, not all the people use it, as they usually pour the water used in household activities into the streams which flow in front of the houses. What I really don't like is that streams and rivers are not always clean, because people throw dirt/waste/garbage into the water. Another bad thing is that there are not many jobs in the commune and in the neighbouring areas, that's why many*

*young people have gone to big cities or abroad. Another disadvantage is that we do not have a general hospital, a maternity hospital or a bank and we have to travel many kilometres to reach them. The roads aren't too good either. Some are not paved, although projects for asphaltting them have been around for a long time, but nothing has been done yet. As far as I know, there are people who could work, who could do more for the benefit of the community because they benefit from the local councils social assistance programs. I think they could help a lot if, instead of sitting in vain, they tried to clean the roads, to plant trees and flowers or take care of the benches and the green spaces in which the local authorities invested public money. There are fields in which social assistance beneficiaries and even ordinary villagers could contribute to maintenance and improvement. Instead of destroying them, as sometimes happens, they could help. We also have problems with some groups in the community that do not know how to preserve what has been modernized and even cause destruction and vandalism.*

At the beginning of the group discussions, immediately after I finished reading the three stories, the participants had many positive comments about the style of the presentation and about the stories themselves: *how nice it sounds; it's a cool method; I would like to learn it and to apply it in my work; it's impactful; it seems to be a good combination between science and art.* Then, most comments illustrated the participants' reflections on the potential of the method to raise awareness of community issues and resources, but also on the motivation to produce positive change in local communities: *this makes me think more seriously about how the situation is and how my community could develop; I can see more clearly now which is the right direction for change; the comparison with other similar communities makes me better define local issues; I think I can get involved.* Other comments focused on the potential of the method to reach policy makers and authorities: *if you present the citizens' opinions and points of view to the authorities in this way, I think it is more effective than any protest; I believe that storytelling can make both the citizens and the authorities more aware of local issues and can make them more responsible and involved.* In addition, some comments even referred to the process of writing the essay, required as a seminar task: *I felt very stimulated to write about how I see my community; no one has asked us something like that before.*

Next, students commented, debated and reflected on their local communities. I selected some of the most interesting comments generated during the discussions, based on the three stories.

Comments after reading the 1<sup>st</sup> story (about the large city): *Development brings with it an increase in population, which can be considered both an advantage and a disadvantage; There could be more centres/clubs for young people, where they can meet and socialize other than online; Sometimes development can be a bad thing: land that once served as agricultural areas or orchards is now transformed into tall, crowded blocks of flats which appear overnight and, with them, new members of the community come into the city, perhaps sometimes unwanted; There are some negative aspects that, unfortunately, not many people think about: for example, that there are too many cars and, because of this, the air is polluted.*

Comments after reading the 2<sup>nd</sup> story (about the small/medium town): *The lack of employment opportunities, the phenomenon of aging in community population and the lack of certain developed social services represent a reality that many ignore, but we, as future specialists, have a duty to approach these issues responsibly; Many people say and perpetuate the image that it is a small and "dead" town, but it is not true, there are many things that can be done with a vision based on development; I would like a certain way of collective thinking to disappear, the so-called "peasant mentality": you don't have enough freedom to be yourself, but you seem to be supervised... who you go out with, who you talk to, what you do, etc.*

Comments after reading the 3<sup>rd</sup> story (about the rural community): *Now, hearing what other colleagues have said, I realize that in my commune there are no clear development plans and the mayors are not emancipated and open enough to local development; I think that the people in rural communities should be better informed about the opportunities for community*

*development, especially the authorities, but also ordinary citizens ... I think that more informative activities would be appropriate for rural communities; It is good that we have some tourist attractions, but more should be done to promote them and create facilities for tourists.*

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

The previous research confirmed that the combination of storytelling and speaking back method could be an important way to increase critical thinking and reflection on local community's issues and assets in students. Moreover, it seems to be able to increase the motivation to participate in community development initiatives and projects. Used properly, this combination of methods could be a very useful tool in working with other members of local communities, selected according to research-action or social intervention interests.

The technique of compiling stories using the descriptive style of storytelling has been used, for example, in some studies on social identity, highlighting various *identity experiences* (Little and Froggett, 2010) such as the association that Pakistani women made between their personal suffering and their honourable identity (Grima, 1991 apud Little, Froggett, 2010) or the reconstruction of past identities, associated with communism, by the inhabitants of East Berlin, from the perspective of the post-communist present (Andrews, 2000). More recently, storytelling has been confirmed as an effective means for identifying the differences in perspectives and voices in the field of local energy policies, and then for achieving new pathways on local energy policy issues (Mourik, Sonetti and Robison, 2021).

I have also worked with this technique several times (Șandru and Zanca, 2009; Șandru, 2012) and, although there is no clear procedure for what a researcher has to do, I have learned that the main steps are as follows: first, to carefully read the materials you collected in form of narratives or stories; second, to make a selection of what seems to be essential for describing the studied social world; third, to rearrange the selected materials by themes or categories (defined according both to the research objectives and the content of the materials); finally, to compose a story that is unique, interesting, and rich in information, which seems to be really spoken by a single voice - by the typical, representative subject of the research. It is about a single voice that encompasses all the others and offers a global and intrinsic perspective on the subjective experiences of the participants.

In the cases presented above, storytelling highlights the differences in terms of type of community. The participants belonging to the three types of local communities highlighted different opportunities and issues specific to their places. For example, if in the case of the large city are listed advantages related to attracting new businesses or significant investments in urban regeneration, in the case of the rural community are highlighted aspects related to the organization of economic life, but also typical problems for rural areas, such as household practices that may contravene the current norms of environmental protection and the issue of underutilization of labour among beneficiaries of social assistance national programs.

Thus, the combination of the two methods into one called *speaking back by storytelling* has the potential to significantly contribute to increasing critical thinking and motivation for participation in community development initiatives and activities.

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## CRIME AND SOCIAL REACTION: OBSTACLES TO FORMING A GENERAL THEORY OF CRIME

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**Abstract:** *This paper focus on the most important discussions presented today concerning the construction of the research object in sociology of crime, which puts it in the duality of dimension and generates a double interpretation of the concept of crime and social reaction. At the stage of building the object within the institutional space which imposes restrictions on produce knowledge, interpretation oscillates between process and structural approaches, which are reflected at the cognitive level between two competing interpretive action/reaction paradigms. The attempts to synthesize them are one of the significant problems that affect the possibility of forming a general theory of crime. A new current known as "Zemiology", trying to link the relationship between crime and social harm, and is the only current that can collect the disparity of this field of knowledge and overcome the problem of the general theory of crime, by reviewing the concept that is the object of science itself, bypassing the duality of action and construction.*

**Key words:** sociology of crime; deviance; criminal law; paradigm; social reaction

### 1. Introduction

Crime as a social act, and criminality as a vast social movement, considered a phenomenon that mediates the cognitive process of social groups of any characteristics. That process varies and is subject to many factors, including the norms arising from the culture and the humanistic coefficient of cultural data as called by Znaniecki (Janina,1989). The researcher, convinced in the universality of crime and its anthological nature, place this one in a philosophical sterile dialectic circle. Moreover, those who believed in its normative legal identity place it in a tight field, take a stand in danger of embracing reality for personal normative peace and recognizing it (Langlois, 2007: 39). Thus, how can we study the reality of crime, without researching even the historical, socio-economic and political contexts affecting its emergence?

The controversial duality at the level of the reading scale crime/criminal and criminality, widely discussed in the literature, therefore, this leads us to examine and discuss three specific levels:

A significant amount of research is concerned with the first and second (crime/criminal) reading scale. It finds their reference in clinical work related to the Belgian School of Louvain exploring the causality of crime at the individual stage and the act commitment called objectivist or normative criminology - relative to the explanatory paradigm (Szabo,1986; Pires, 1992; 1994; Debuyst, 1992). This reference affected even the level of conceptual construction of crime; that model, known for researching causality and too associated with the comparative clinical criminology, attempted to drafting universal preventive and curative procedure through analyzing the main fundamental causes of delinquency. According to De Greeff, what distinguishes the offender at the level of psychological issues from other normal people in society is his offence which we identify contrary to the determinism and classic status of free will in defining criminal accountability, for what it has different and opposed to the biological view<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>After De Greeff, Pinatel founded his theory of the central nucleus of the criminal character, attempting to show the relationship between behaviour and personality traits through the central nucleus that includes selfishness, aggression and emotional amazement, and this essence is the one that governs the act commitment

The second and third (criminal/criminality) reading scale are related to the macro theories in the sociological approach, what we recognize in the theoretical classification the theories of social structure. These theories treat crime as a collective phenomenon not at the level of the individual, and expresses the criminality in its wide sense, linked to a complex relational network that reflects the confrontation between the criminal, the forces of social control and the settlement systems.

The fundamental analysis of these theories based on the objective/self-macro-sociological level (Ritzer, 2011: 503) linked to the causal explanatory model still expressed in the sociology of conventional deviance. Second paradigm, recognized as the social reaction paradigm, frames the second level of analysis- objective/subjective micro-sociology- and organizes theories known in classification as control and social reaction theories. This last one is widely reported and explored in the literature by the Chicago American School known as the mentor of symbolic interactionism. It should be noted however that, for this paradigm, crime is a social construction and reaction to a set of behaviors within a value and normative framework in society.

Competitive paradigms<sup>2</sup> – action/reaction – put the object of a sociology of crime/deviance in binary, one refers us to the pure and raw action and the other to the social reaction that the social construction of the action, affected the cognitive construction of the crime reflected in a problem of a constructivist nature. This can hamper to building a general theory of crime. Moreover, this problematic may be reflecting on several levels, including what it relates to the anthological nature of the concept versus objective structure. As well as, what is epistemologically reflected in the cognitive level of the knowing subject and the knowledge-building of objects.

## **2. Sociology of crime/deviance toward cognitive debate**

By reviewing literature reflected the disciplines presented in sociology of crime/deviance, it was interesting to note that many of them are trying to justify the importance and merit of a designation over another. Certain researcher focuses on deviance as a consequence of the application by others of norms and sanctions to a transgressor, this convention is mostly exposed by Becker 1963. There is a preference from others to considering crime as a defined conception framed by laws which are the objective and official criminal standard of States (Among others Leblanc and Frechette, 1987, Robert, 2005), however, the issue is not a seek of choice, not a question of distinction in the object, It is somewhat limiting the status to the legal norm - crime - which makes it a limited vision, or what reflecting social norms transgression issues which is “deviance”.

This led other researchers to consider that the expansion of deviance may undermine all interpretive attempts (*Op-cit.*: 28), besides the scarcity of historical studies addressing these issues (Copes and Miller, 2015: 69). It expresses the cognitive problem in this field of knowledge both in terms of theory and praxis, as relates in theorizing to the issue of constructing the object and his epistemological and anthological related boundaries. However links the practice to the societal reaction during which the contrast between crime and deviance determined by the same time the problematic social construction knowledge, and scientific fact.

The researcher who starts real research by choosing the object of his inquiry through the institutional space and its requirement limitation on producing science, may overlook one of the important views which is whether the facts are relevant to the reality of the living and the social context of the field of investigation, or pure cognitive aspects that are related to the

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<sup>2</sup> Scientists and researchers differ in the presentation of these paradigms, Wilson 1970 proposes the normative and the interpretive model, while Conrad, Schneider 1980 proposes a positive and interactive model, Pires 1983 revolves around the criminology of act and control, or the sociology of the conventional deviance, see: Pires, A. (1995). A propos des objets en criminologie : quelques réponses, In : *Déviante et société*. Vol. 19 - N°3. pp. 291-303 [online] available at: [www.persee.fr/doc/ds\\_0378-7931\\_1995\\_num\\_19\\_3\\_1581](http://www.persee.fr/doc/ds_0378-7931_1995_num_19_3_1581)

advance theory frameworks, cannot overcome even though It was distortedly aware of the restriction imposed by the knowledge code of scientific nomenclature.

Therefore, it was certain to look at the contexts that control the production of facts and to ask whether knowledge applies to the theoretical frameworks of specialization, or socially constructed and relevant to the intellectual process of the knowing subject. The problematic crystallized through this proposition, relate to the reasons of no possibility to form a general theory of crime because of the conflict of construction and action, and it was necessary to define the social organization of this process and to point out to the social context in which phenomena are produced cognitively.

According to this point of view, wherefrom we put this field of knowledge in the dialectic of crime and deviance and between the institutional reaction of legal rules and customary cultural, reflected in our belief in the earlier explanatory paradigms. These findings reinforce the basis of the controversy over the possibility beyond these models or synthesizing them, and thus to build a general theory.

### **3. Crime and the dialectic interpretation**

Clearly, it is well-recognized association between man and crime since the oldest stage of life, and not possible to imagine a society without harm, because we condemn this one to be utopian and doomed to fade, that is why Durkheim considers crime necessary. It is linked to the basic conditions of social life, but on this very account is useful, for the conditions to which it is bound are themselves indispensable to the normal evolution of morality and law (2013: 63).

Nevertheless, Research has shown that a good knowledge of the laws and a positive attitude towards them are not sufficient to ensure compliance with these rules. The majority of offenders have a very conventional attitude to the law (Picca, 2009: 63), but there violation does not mean the individual confrontation, nor a tendency to challenge normativity or acts intended to justify positions referred to the rejection of part of the social norms that are reflected in these laws; But a several personal and societal factors have to be considered at the same time. Why many theories -psychological, biological and juridical- are enabled to interpret all crimes and harmful behaviours, which required the development of a multidisciplinary approach of criminology to overcome this dilemma at the theoretical and empirical level.

The notion of crime has always interpreted within the legal code, which is subject in its definition to time/ space matrix, and essentially related to the law as a normative science, because he denies its existence only through official rules and in return through the punishment prescribed. Hence, to understand and determine the object of criminology or the sociology of deviance, the following questions have been discussed:

Should we examine all acts prohibited by social norm even if they do not appear in the Penal Code? In positive answer, we have made the latter part of the whole and therefore part of the sociological criminology studies. Or should we examine only the acts prescribed by law? As argued by Robert, so, in this case, the law became the hidden morality of this science (Pires,1995: 71) and we are limiting it to the official social reaction, so-called social control model.

The Italian legislator Carrara enhance the second idea when he states that the crime should not be seen as a material act, but a violation of the criminal law, thus a judicial identity (*ibid*: 08). The earlier view finds its reference since the classical thought of many philosophers such as Beccaria and Bentham, for them the offence is every act prohibited by law for the harm caused and threatens the safety of the group. Further improvements of the legal definition are cited by Durkheim, when he saying, "It is not of course punishment that causes crime, but it is through punishment that crime, in its external aspects, is revealed to us. And it is therefore punishment that must be our starting point if we wish to understand crime" (p.45).

Laws finds there reference in criminalizing acts to what is harmful to society or the social organization, but this supposedly evidence remains relative, because the notion of social order

and anti-social behaviour is difficult to measure precisely, and we faced difficulty to determine criminal conduct through them, why they do not explain all acts, as showed by white-collar crime. Sutherland and modern Marxists such as Chambliss and Pearce spoke about corporate offence, such as defrauding in pharmaceuticals, damage caused by the contamination and leakage of toxic gases from some factories, and financial crimes, especially as Often, despite the prejudice caused by these acts, they are not punishable or at least subject to the civil code of the law. Reiman argues that:

"Many of the ways in which the well-off harm their fellows (deadly pollution, unsafe working conditions, and some of the harmful practices that have led to financial crises) are not even defined as crimes, though they do more damage to life and limb or take more money from people's pockets than the acts that are treated as crimes" (Reiman and Leighton, 2017: 15).

The principle of criminalization is subject to time and space, that's why codes vary from state to state according the degree of cohesion of societies. Although the proportionality of laws and their transformation as the value system of societies changed, some criminal acts have a common characteristic which are hardly devoid of all the laws of the world, they haunted man since the earliest times and have been criminalized because they are subject to high rejection and aversion.

Those crimes share two characteristics we are trying to present through the proposal developed by Gassin In his theory, called "*le noyau dur du droit pénal*" –The hard core of criminal law- violence and deception, such murder, poisoning, fraud, rape... Etc. Since all acts of individuals resorting to this type of behaviour or intentions in request to reach a particular end disrupted the social stability system, have been subject to a sense of injustice by others and violated the principle of contractual justice (Cusson,1998: 38).

The principle above regulates the conditions of the people, why it requires, with infraction, the direct intervention of State institutions through the law and the retribution to readjust social balance. Classical intellectuals and utilitarian philosophers justified this view, because the punishment should be deterrent and outweigh the pleasure of the criminal act. For Beccaria, as an example of this classical reflection, prisons must be less comfortable than the worst conditions in which the poorest free citizen lives; otherwise, we will encourage people to commit crimes to get better living conditions in prisons (Siegel, 2010: 96).

Acts mentioned previously were carrying two concepts discussed above, deception and violence, because offenders attempted to take something by force or prevarication and misinformation to take what is not due, although man, even in case of nature for Hobbes, resorted to violence and treachery in doing so to survive and continue. However through the formation of societies and people's regularity towards particular interests, there has been a particular awareness of justice and social contract, as enlightenment philosophers call it; this awareness is the true founder of contractual justice, reflected in the laws governing people's conditions. Thus every act goes the opposite, conjure a sense of injustice and therefore punishment not only for deterrence but also and implicitly to recover the stolen thing as violation a strong feeling inherent in the collective sentiments, as explained by Durkheim (p.82).

For ancient societies, retribution consist to inflict on the delinquent the same harm as what he did to the victim through a principle of an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth in Hammurabi's code and heavenly canons. Societies punished for major infractions violate the strong feelings of piety and righteousness in the notion of Tarde with the most atrocious punishment, specifically physical harm, by inflicting damage on the body instead of the soul. Even, Beccaria in his book "*Traité des délits et des peines1764*" reveals, following that period, a murder, which we consider being one of the most vicious crimes, we see executes without the slightest regret (Foucault, 1975: 14-15).

There have been multiple previous attempts to identify the object of criminology and criticize the aforementioned principle. We find Brodeur, when he presents a realistic theory by studying the Canadian Penal Code and proving the rule of criminalization of behaviors, carried

out through a process of communication between the state and civil society. Cusson (Gassin, 2007) however tried to reinforce Gassin's proposal based on the results of the American study conducted by Wolfgang, Sellin and Coll 1984 through the national survey of crime severity.

#### 4. Objective and subjective structure: the paradox dilemma

Through the above stated, we can raise a problem of another kind, the objective structure of criminal laws is transformed under various social situations, action and interpretation through social actors, who also form an objective identity within this structure, into a subjective system affected by humanistic coefficient and social situations.

Garfinkel and Cicourel in their studies on social order and juvenile delinquency, shows how the evidence of documentary delinquency, influence the police and jurors and how the interpretations of deviation in particular contexts may be completely wrong in that they are subject matter to common sense (Coulon, 2002).

Although the criminalization of behaviors through the codes, their application or the establishment of guilt "*Etablir la culpabilité*" is subject to specialist knowledge, which comprises professional training and field experience, usually between scientific knowledge and common sense, hence the treatment of criminality on two levels: official and informal, so criminal laws gained a real sense by their application through social interaction and interpretation. We overlooked an issue in the legal sciences as the process of how cases are adapted and acts criminalized, in the sense that there is a link between crime as a raw fact outside the criminal proceeding and the act as a legal character after its adaptation as Debuyst noted that the criminal movement is problematic and referring us in two directions as follows:

1- A particular behavior or a type of action.

2- A criminal adjective or a type of expression and reaction through the system (Pires, 1993: 49).

From this we can conclude that, although the criminal Code and official institutions identifications of crimes, the determination of behaviour cannot be separated from the social practices it calls as crime and therefore we cannot study this one **outer** this context and limited it to pure judicial procedures and constitutional rules. Marc LeBlanc and Nguyen Thi, in their study on the social reaction of deviation (1974), have concluded that there is a gap between the official reaction versus the judicial reality, particularly about economic crimes. These details are conforming to the thesis of Wolfgang, Sellin and *coll.*

From what we point earlier, the main conclusion that we can draw from this analysis, there is a link between the formal social reaction and members of society, especially in multicultural societies. So, the criminalization of the act reflects not only violent one attacks the strong feelings of the collective sentiments but also acts hinder the social path, far from ideological discourse, all behaviour that come out of this circle cannot be criminalized and punished. Many acts were one of the most serious crimes and punished by the most heinous one such as sorcery and adultery, today are merely ethical issues which are dealt in some legislation at the individual level, which explains the evolution and change of laws by time and space, accompanied by the development of societies.

In conclude, part of the articles of law reflect what is inherent in the consciousness of individuals and are embedded through the process of socialization derived from religion, customs and traditions and, which explains the existence of double regulation in many worlds that are yet in transition towards modernity. The punitive and religious policies are confused because of the lack of a disconnection between established scientific knowledge and transmitted one based on processes that are unknown and difficult to control. In this sense, there is no possibility to develop a unified model which we can invoke because of epistemological constraints in producing science.

## 5. Conclusion

As discussed in a previous article (Bouhroum and Imad,2018) on the conflict of the paradigm and the gap between objective and subjective structures, consider the study of crime as limits of science impose itself on the researcher while dealing with the question of crime as an anthological view. We are witnessing today in criminology the emergence of a set of theoretical perspective seeking to overcome this issue by discussing the historical contexts and epistemological frame accompanied the theorizing of crime and deviance.

The critical criminology and new criminology as designed by Walton, Taylor and Young(Walton and Jock, 1998) are regarded as a neo-Marxist currents, and another trend known as "Zemiology", by trying to link the relationship between crime and social harm, and we believe is the only current that can collect the disparity of this field of knowledge and overcome the problem of the general theory of crime, by reviewing the concept that is the object of science itself, bypassing the duality of action and construction.

Reservation remains about the possibility of making this current as an alternative to the criminology or extension for its object, but only a critical and corrective movement within this field.

It has become fashionable to assert that if someone wants to practice criminology; he should have a general theory (Morrison, 1995: 456); this one was the attempt of postmodern criminology, criticized and seen as a set of ideas about social reality rather than a good or understandable theory. Finally, we can ask a series of questions about this period and its conceptions regarding the possibility of forming a general theory of crime:

1. Are we looking at how to build the social system as classical theories have done? Or looking at causality as positivism did?
2. Research into causality requires an individual's place in a particular social context, but why ignored the social processes formed the individual?
3. How can we build a general theory outside a social space and deny the social formation of the self?
4. Was the idea of reshaping the social system in order to determine what is harmful to postmodern society? Or reshaping the censure network according to the requirements of the phase?

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## THE AWAKENING OF NATIONALISM OF THE CAMEROON CLERGE OF THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION (MPA) (1940-1957)

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**Abstract:** *Its area of evangelization of South Cameroon, missionaries of the MPA had introduced the ideas of freedom and autonomy among his flock to fight against French colonization and allow the political and social empowerment of black people. However, after the Second World War, while political leaders molded in schools of the MPA were fighting for the independence of Cameroon, African employees the Mission and trained to the awakening of consciousness began to assert their masters, the improvement of working conditions and the handling of the management of the heritage of the Mission. The pressure of the black clergy had pushed the MPA to grant independence to the missionary field giving birth, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1957, in the Cameroonian Presbyterian Church (EPC). With the withdrawal of the American missionaries, the problem of the management of an important heritage designed since the end of the 19<sup>e</sup> century arose, because pastors African, few in number, but avid authority, had not received the training required to ensure the relay of these Apostles of good new and well trained to the task to ensure the technical work in different medical institutions, schools, agricultural. So far, the problem remains real in this church, the opposite of self-propagating who brought the early Church to create more than 500 parishes in fifty years of independence.*

**Key words:** presbyterian; church; heritage; missionaries; nationalism.

### 1. Introduction

The forest south of Cameroon has been a favorable area for the apostolic work of the MPA. From the locality of Grand Batang where they have been established since 1866 from Gabon where they are driven out by the French colonial administration, they create, from the coast towards the interior of the country, in Boulou and Bassa countries, nineteen and establish a real Mission in the territory (AMAL, 2012: 30). In its apostolate, and in order to facilitate the autonomy of the Church born of my mission, the MPA remains faithful to the principle of the ideology of Protestantism which aims to make the missionary, a free being, capable of self-government (self governing), to be self-supporting (self-supporting) and to continue to spread the good news (self-propagating). To do this and to facilitate the conversion of the neophyte, the MPA has developed an important socio-economic work in its area of influence (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1935: 2). These missionaries also train their followers in free expression and in awareness and awareness raising. Against the colonial administration in Cameroon under French administration. However, after the Second World War, the MPA will be within it, itself a victim of the awakening of nationalism manifested by demands for autonomy and independence of the missionary field of Cameroon, because of the treatment reserved for the native prelate. As we will see later. 1943 is the year in which the MPA grants internal autonomy to the missionary field of Cameroon by including certain blacks in the management of Church affairs. 1957 is the year of the birth of a local Church under the embers of the push of the demands of the local clergy, in a context marked by the hasty pressure of the nationalists for the accession of Cameroon to independence. The purpose of this article is to understand how the awakening spirit of black clergy nationalism took shape within the MPA. How the missionaries reacted to the multiple claims of the African clergy. To do this, we will first see how

the Black clergy feared the preponderance of White Missionary Pastors. Then we will see from the unhealthy climate that reigned within the Mission between the Whites and the Blacks how the local Church was born. Finally understand in what context the passage of the witness took place between Cameroonians and Americans.

## 2. The dissidence of the African clergy from the mission

The important event which marks the decolonization of the MPA's missionary field in Cameroon is the dissent of the Cameroonian clergy who claim the right of equality and consideration within the Mission. Their leader is Pastor Akoa Abomo (Akoa Mongo, 2011: 3), the only one who, at the time, could read and write English the basic language on which the texts in force in the missionary field of Cameroon were translated. To understand the motives of these demands, it seemed important to us to take an interest first in the situation of these Black workers within the Mission (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1940: 4).

### 2.1. The precarious situation of the African clergy of the MPA

The Black collaborators in general and the African pastors in particular had a precarious situation within the Mission. The latter had no power. Pastors missionaries were both station leaders and patrons of African pastors. Pastor Bolivard Ondo emphasizes in this regard that, the Black Pastors lived with bitterness. Their role was secondary. Moreover, they realized that their assignments did not come under their jurisdiction which is the consistory, but of the goodwill of the missionaries, even if these are very young compared to the old black servants (National Archives of Yaounde, 1AC, 3523, 1953: 3).

Missionaries were superintendents responsible for overseeing a group of parishes at the stations, while the role of black pastors was limited to looking after individual parishes. However, the Board noted the progress made by the MPA in Cameroon and recommended the establishment of a committee that prepares the principles of transfer of powers to blacks to prepare them for the establishment of a responsible indigenous Church (AMAL, 2012: 33). Unfortunately, this action of the Board in New York remained underground and unknown to black pastors apart from a few unofficial indiscretions since the Cameroonian leaders were unaware of the action of the missionaries at the level of the direction in New York, where all the major decisions concerning the Cameroon missionary field were taken (National Archives of Yaounde, 1AC 1914, 1940: 2). These indiscretions led black pastors to make their voices heard through petitions. But on the whole, Cameroonian pastors, unlike politicians trained in MPA schools, had chosen the path of reason. These demands began with the advent of new jurisdictions within the Mission to prepare for the establishment of a local Church (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1940: 5). The establishment of the courts was also consecutive to the creation of several parishes. The table below shows the evolution of the creation of parishes of the MPA in Cameroon, in relation to the number of faithful.

**Table no. 1: Statistics of the evolution of the evangelization of the MPA in Cameroon 1929-1957**

Years	Number parishes	Number of Stations	Numbers of Consistories	Number of synods	Number of Missionary pastors	Number of national pastors	Total number of communicating members
1929	52	14	01	0	22	22	31130
1936	52	14	01	1	28	49	38000
1946	64	19	03	01	28	60	46278
1952	86	19	08	01	21	71	74411
1955	155	19	10	03	20	86	75179
1957	195	19	10	03	23	90	76000

Source: AEPC. Minutes of the Mission Meetings from 1929 to 1957.

This allows us to notice that the number of Cameroonian pastors doubled from 1929 to 1936, that is to say in 7 years, going from 22 to 49 and doubled 21 years later. It must still be recognized that if this number experienced this slowed evolution between 1936 and 1957, it is because of the schism in the missionary field of the MPA, which gave birth in 1934 to the African Protestant Church (EPA) (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1935: 6). On the other hand, the number of missionary pastors has remained almost static. At the request of the missionaries to create the Cameroon Synod to integrate blacks in the government of the Mission, the Board agreed. The condition for this jurisdiction to be created in Cameroon was to divide the Presbytery Corisco into three distinct jurisdictions. This is what was done during the Assizes of the Corisco Presbytery meeting in Sakbayémé from February 25 to 26, 1935 (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1935: 7). This division was effective in 1936 and the three new jurisdictions which integrated the native pastors into the government were as follows:

The Corisco Presbytery:

- Moderator: Eduma Musambani;
- Secretary: A.I Good;
- 5 stations: Bénito, Batanga, Efulan, Elat, Lolodorf (Bibia): 33 parishes with 17 national pastors and 05 missionaries.

The Presbytery Metet:

- Moderator: W.C. Johnston;
- Secretary: F.O. Emerson;
- 5 stations: Foulassi, Metet, Yaoundé, Bafia, Nkolmvolan: 19 parishes with 11 national pastors and 09 missionaries.

The Sanaga Presbytery:

- Moderator: L. Paul Moore;
- Secretary: Gustave Essombé;
- 2 stations in Edea and Sakbayeme: 03 national pastors and 04 missionaries (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1935: 8).

These jurisdictions constituted frameworks of mixed exchange where dialogue was possible between the missionaries and the native prelate. The advent of the Cameroon synod had first led to the creation of a committee to integrate Africans into the decision-making circle, called the Synod Mission, which was a kind of board of directors (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1937: 10). But in reality, this structure remained subordinate to the Mission Meeting which is mandated to administer the field on behalf of the New York Board. Then the increase of mixed discussion frames from consistories where whites and blacks meet and discuss problems from the church. Finally, the opening of a path towards the independence of the Church, with the increase of the faithful, pastors, consistories and a demand for the division of the synod, for a more rational organization of work. Already, in 1934, the assizes of the Consistory Corisco at the Olama Station had brought an evolution on the direction of the parish councils and the assignment of the national pastors who received their assignment according to the attachment towards the missionary. The custom of having whites as heads of local churches and black pastors as auxiliaries was opposed by the latter. With the spirit of independence which animated the consistories, the missionaries instituted in 1938, the mixed conferences which were not jurisdictions as such, but frameworks of incubation of the Blacks with the financial management and the administration (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1938: 16). General of the Church. This conference brought together all the missionaries and all the black leaders of the evangelization zone. The object was to deal with special topics on the problems which could lead the natives to autonomy and independence. With the push for freedom and independence, the missionaries did not realize that they had not prepared enough Africans to administer themselves in the event of a possible departure of the missionaries. Certainly they had taught the gospel, but they themselves were omniscient and omnipotent in administrative

and financial management. The first such conference was held at the Elat station to discuss the accountability of blacks in managing the financial affairs of the Church (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1938:17).

However, such conferences could not fail to reinforce the animosity and the spirit of protest which materialized and manifested itself publicly at the assizes of the Cameroon synod convened at Bibia Station by Lolodorf in 1940.

## **2.2. The protest of the black pastors at the Synod of Bibia**

Discontent was becoming significant and visible among the African pastors of the MPA. The latter decided to openly let their colleagues know their thoughts white. It was therefore necessary to seek a means at the Cameroon Synod which was to be held at the Bibia station from November 25 to December 1, 1940. The black pastors wanted to hold a preliminary meeting two days before the meeting. Pastor Akoa Abomo, one of the most enlightened, having presented this proposal to the moderating pastor of the place was disappointed by the latter's categorical refusal. Pastor Etundi Essam, originally from the village of Melangue located 15 km from the Bibia station, invited his counterparts to hold the consultation in his village. The invitations having been sent, all 32 black pastors were at Méléangue's meeting. During the consultation, Pastor Akoa Abomo brought out the constitution of the American Presbyterian Church which stipulated that: All the ministers of the Word and of the Sacraments of the Reformed Churches are equal. They may have different levels of intellectual training, but they have the same rights in the exercise of the pastoral ministry to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments, to be moderator of the session without needing assistance or the supervision of another minister (DEFAP, 1957:14).

The Black pastors seized these provisions to peel together all that prevented the frank collaboration between their Western colleagues and them. At the end of two days of reflection, they signed a 15-point petition, written in Bulu and English, by Pastor Akoa Abomo, and addressed to the Cameroon Synod whose work was to begin at the Mac Clean Station in Bibia (DEFAP, 1957:15). These 15 points simply summarized the involvement of black pastors in the management of the missionary heritage as early as 1940 and for missionaries to become fathers and counselors. In the petition it is clearly stated that:

Our Church is Presbyterian in name, but episcopal in many aspects, when the laws of the Presbyterian Church say that all pastors are equal in order of work, but may differ in wealth and wisdom (Essono Essono, 2014: 7). The missionary is the director of national pastors; he has the power to remove or accept those he likes. We are tired of being your workers with joy in our hearts, we are tired of following your plans doing only that the things you tell us every year, you received your honors when you were before us, now please place us before our people this year, and allow us to appear as co-workers of God in his Church (Eyezo'o Salvador. 2012:22). Be moderators of the Church of the stations and leave us those of the countryside. The spirit of the petition simply translates that the leadership of the Church was to be handed over to the Black Pastors at the end of 1941 (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941: 8). This transfer was not to wait any longer. The rush was clear and the emergency signaled. This request marks the recognition of black pastors to missionaries as sages and founders of the Mission, who deserve the role of pillars and counselors.

On reading it, the missionaries deemed the request worthy of attention and the following recommendations were adopted by the Mission Meeting held in Elat in 1941:

- The creation of financial committees in synods, consistories and stations; -Presidency of parish sessions by Black pastors, provided that they have experience acquired over three years with an elder;
- This plan, once adopted by the Mission, will be presented to the Cameroon Synod as the response to the request of the indigenous pastors;
- The unification of evangelical action through the creation of a joint committee;

- Recognize Black leaders as spiritual guides of the Church, for any other subject besides finances. Missionaries stand behind as father and teacher. They help black leaders in areas where there are still difficulties, for example in relations with the Government (DEFAP, 1957:22). But the withdrawal of missionaries from the Cameroon field had to be prepared. At the Cameroon Synod meeting held at the Sakbayémé Station the same year, it was decided that the handing over of responsibilities to blacks would be done gradually and gradually as the African pastors became more and more capable through a specific plan that inaugurated the era of the internal autonomy of the Church.

### **3. The internal autonomy of the church and the progressive integration of blacks in the management of the missionary heritage of the MPA (1943-1957)**

With the recognition of the authority of the Black pastors, it was necessary for the missionaries to make arrangements and give new directions for the effective integration of the Black pastors in the management of the affairs of the Mission. From 1943, the latter could become moderator of parish councils without reservation. In stations, where there is a missionary pastor and a Black pastor, rotation was recommended according to the Church Constitution. From then on, a new spirit entered the missionary field of Cameroon. The response from America contained a whole specific plan of action for evangelical work in Cameroon (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1935:8).

#### **3.1. The integration of black pastors in the management of Church affairs**

The year 1943 marked the evolution of the missionary field of Cameroon, in particular the change of the name of the Mission (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1943: 2). Instead of the American Protestant Mission (MPA), the name of the Mission became, "the Cameroonian Presbyterian Mission". Presbyterian because all ministers were now equal. From now on, it was obvious that the Black pastors were really integrated in the management of the missionary heritage. This suggested that a path was opening for the independence of the missionary field of Cameroon. It was for this reason that the MPA had undertaken a hasty formation without any real solid basis. Integration was gradual and responded to a general plan that the missionaries had set up from 1943. (DEFAP, 1957:22) This plan dealt with all the aspects of the Church: finances, offices, administration. He gives details of the organization of the parish as follows: Black pastors can become moderators of parish councils without reserve. In stations where there is a missionary pastor and a native pastor, they rotate in moderation according to the Constitution of the American Presbytery Church. At the level of each jurisdiction (parish, presbytery, synod) various committees (finance, education and evangelization) were organized (DEFAP, 1957:23).

This plan was received with relief by African pastors. He clearly showed that the authority to lead the Church was ceded to the nationals. A decisive step was taken in 1943 with the election of Blacks as executive secretaries. Here are the first elected in the different jurisdictions:

- Corisco Consistory: Pastor Akoa Abomo François;
- Sanaga Consistory: Pastor Seigfreid Dibong;
- Metet Consistory: Pastor Atouba;
- Cameroon Synod: Pastor Akoa Abomo François;
- Secretary of the Church: A / E Avebe Okono;
- Treasurer of the Church: the nurse and Elder of the Church Bula Mfum (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1938:10)

The time had come for the Mission to prepare for some time the future leaders of the Church, that is, the higher-level executives who could also represent the Church at the

international level. It was from 1945 that the decision was taken to carry out the time had come for the Mission to prepare for some time the future leaders of the Church, that is, the higher level executives who could also represent the Church at the international level. It was from 1945 that the decision was taken to carry out such training (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1938:11). The departure of these Church executives for training began with Pastors Akoa Abomo François and Tjéga Joseph who were chosen for higher studies at Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA between 1947 and 1948. Pastor Meye Me Nkwele was sent to Mc Cornick Seminary in the USA for one year. Pastor Mandeng David will spend two years at Lincoln University in the USA and six months in Switzerland. Pastor Mvondo Atsam went to a conference in the USA in 1952. Pastor Biyong André and Andjongo Jean went to Aix – En – Provence in France for a year and returned in 1952 (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1952:23). Pastor Abed Nego Makon and Mumbok went to France and America to learn the work of youth supervision. Pastors Awumu Jean and Bell Luc went to Switzerland to Neuchatel. Pastor Abengoyap and his wife went to Lincoln in 1958. Madam Oko Rebeca from Spanish Guinea was sent to the women of America to learn about the organization of women's movements within the Church. There were also laymen including dental technicians from Enongal who went to France for laboratory work (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1955:23).

However, it is important to stress that these short-term training courses were insufficient to take charge of such an important work, the management of which was ensured by well-equipped and well-trained experts in the large Western universities. In most cases, these training courses did not lead to a university degree. This means that they were basically internships or seminars for a time and not training courses pursuing a normal course (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1935: 9). It would therefore not be surprising to see the slippages in the management of the Church's heritage from the start. First decade preceding independence, because the first cadres likely to bear the weight of the new Church received hasty and superficial training during this period of internal autonomy. With the exception of Pastor Tjéga, dental assistants and laboratory nurses who returned from abroad after the training and who have become executives, pastors who went abroad received no executive training. They returned without being useful to the Church or to the Mission. These are the people who were the actors of the transition and the first people in charge within the EPC. Therefore, the transition to the evolving changes that were looming in the Mission was not on solid foundations (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:8). On the ground, ten years after the declaration of internal autonomy in 1943 following the demand of blacks, one of the voices of involvement of Africans was the constitutional evolution of the Mission, in particular the creation of a second Synod. In 1953, by the division of the Sanaga Consistory into three. It is the Bassa-Cameroon Synod with the following presbyteries: Babimbi; Eseka and Sanaga (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:9).

The creation of two Synods within the missionary field was to lead to the coexistence of two structures. On the one hand, the Mission, which held the movable and immovable property, the finances from overseas (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:10). On the other hand, the Native Church, with its system of government and its finances coming from contributions from the faithful. This second frank of the Church was only a Church-worship. This therefore instigated the struggle for the autonomy of the Church with the integration of the Mission into the Church. The independent development of the two Synods within the Church had posed a constitutional problem because two Synods could not come together to form a General Assembly (GA) which has at least three Synods (Bokagne, J.R.B, 1982:9). Therefore, each jurisdiction was evolving on its own. Added to this legal twist was the language barrier between the two jurisdictions: on the one hand, the predominantly Bulu Synod of Cameroon and on the other hand the predominantly low-level Bassa Synod. This predominance will prevail until the emergence of other ethnic groups such as the Ntumu of the far south Cameroon, the Ngumba of the Ocean, the Bafia of the Center and the Makia of the East. The third problem that was posed

with the creation of two Synods was the jurisdictional absence at the top, because each Synod evolved on its own (Rev Ako'o Daniel Ndong Metet 02 May 2012).

In view of this situation, a committee called the Mission-Synod Committee was created which brought together the two tendencies: missionaries and nationals of the two synods. It was chaired by Dr L.K. Anderson, Director of the MPA in Cameroon (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:12). The role of this committee was to deal both with issues that affected the two jurisdictions and to take care of the relationship between Church, Government and financial matters. The delegates appointed by the two jurisdictions and the Mission constituted the members of this committee which could take some decisions concerning the two synods. However, the MPA still had all the powers, so it was obvious that the chairman of the said committee was the Director of the Mission in Cameroon. (Rev Ondo Obiang Bolivar Ma'an November 21, 2011).

However, officials did not realize the fatigue created by this internal organization of the Church between the bassa on one side and the bulu on the other. Because of the linguistic border between these two peoples (the Bassa and the Bulu) and customs, this division into two synods had accentuated and worsened internal conflicts with consequences on the ground (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1955:7). But also the frustrations orchestrated during this moment stimulated the spirits to agree on the need to have a General Assembly to resolve the ethnic problem within the missionary field of the MPA in Cameroon and to move towards the creation of a third Synod. (DEFAP, 1957:18) Thus, the Cameroon Synod reunited in Dan by Bafia from November 29 to December 5, 1955 formulated a request which received a favorable response from America and on December 8, 1956, the Cameroon Synod was divided during its meetings in the parish of Monekoo by Sangmélina thus giving birth to the East Cameroon Synod which extended from Sangmelima to Bafia and Akonolinga in Yokadouma with the following Presbyteries: Yaoundé; Nkolmvolan; Metet (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1951:5).

### 3.2. The establishment of a General Assembly and the taking in May of the destiny of the young Church by the nationals

With the creation of this third synod, the establishment of a GA was evident, both among missionaries and nationals. The Cameroon Synod also changed its name and was henceforth called MUNICAM, having within it a Consistory whose powers extended to Spanish Guinea. The table below shows us the jurisdictional configuration of the Church in 1956 (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1956:11).

**Table no. 2: The jurisdictions of the Church in 1956.**

Synods	Consistories	Number of Pastors
Synod MUNICAM	Ambam	07
	Corisco Rio Muni (Spanish Guinea)	05
	Ntem	16
	Corisco Kribi	15
Synod Bassa	Babimbi	09
	Eseka	13
	Sanaga	08
Synod East Cameroun	Metet	12
	Kadey	09
	Yaounde	08

Source: Table produced from the AEPC.

This table shows us that it was time for the Mission to prepare a cession of the missionary field to nationals already in sufficient number with the necessary jurisdictions with 03 Synods, 10 consistories and 101 local pastors to constitute a GA chaired by a Cameroonian (DEFAP, 1957:19). Taking into account the crisis which prevailed in the whole of the territory and the idea of independence which already animates the two parts, the Presbyterian Church of the USA, in its 196th GA had approved the establishment of a GA in within the Cameroonian Presbyterian Church in December 1957 Taking into account the changes which were to take place in the passage from the Mission to the Church, certain terminologies had been modified as follows:

- The EPC replaces the MPA;
- The term missionary is replaced by that of fraternal collaborator;
- The term Presbytery is replaced by that of Consistory (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:20).

To this was added the Africanization of executives at the level of the management of institutions and the active participation of blacks in medical and agro-pastoral work and in the management of land rights that the MPA was to transfer to the EPC from the start. Establishment of the GA in 1957 (Eyezo'o, Salvador. 2012:30), But what was the level of education of the executives who were to succeed these doctors and engineers in the various institutions? On December 11, 1957, the first GA of the EPC opened in the temple of Elat in Ebolowa, with Pastor Mvondo Atsam Simon of the Consistory Ntem as the first Moderator, Synod MUNICAM, elected by 112 votes against 88 votes for its competitor Essomé Gustave of the Sanaga Consistory, Bassa Synod. Pastor Akoa Abomo of the Consistory Corisco Kribi, MUNICAM Synod was elected first Secretary General of the Church with 144 votes against 58 for Pastor Menye me Mkwele of the Ntem Consistory, MUNICAM Synod. As a transfer of the powers and the patrimony of the Church, Dr. Eugene Blake, representative of the Board handed the Secretary General elect the book of the Constitution of the Church (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:19). Thus began a new era for the history of Presbyterianism in Cameroon based on the teachings received, but without a solid foundation for ensuring the succession of missionaries. The presence of colonial authorities, Cameroonians and other religious denominations in Elat the day of zthe proclamation of the independence of the EPC, testifies to the importance and the influence that the MPA had in Cameroon and the responsibility that awaited the nascent Church with officials little equipped to manage the big structures created by missionaries with funds from overseas (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1941:21).

In short, the EPC, like the other Churches born from the missionary fields in Cameroon, had its independence at the end of the nationalist movements due to the multiple demands of the Cameroonian pastors to manage the heritage: finances, institutions and evangelization. This is what was done during the GA held in Elat from December 11, 1957. However, the question arises as to whether Africans were prepared to manage this heritage from another civilization with regard to their level of training. For from the Melangue meeting in 1940 to the holding of the first GA in 1957, there are only 17 years in which no emphasis has been placed on the formation and management of the Church. (Cameroonian Presbyterian Church, 1955:18). So it goes without saying that with the transfer of the patrimony of the Mission to the Church, the limits of management and management and the struggles for leadership are evident to this day. This poses the obvious problem of autochthony and autonomy of the Churches resulting from the Western Missions in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular.

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## PROFESSIONAL STRESS AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF WORK TO DIDACTICAL WORKERS

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**Abstract:** *This research is based on the axiom that the problematics of stress among teachers in the case of theoretical or practically applicable developments addressed by specialists in various fields over time, still offers, perhaps more today than ever before, the possibility and requirement of new analysis-based and investigative openings leading to more effective stress management. They can be highlighted both theoretically and practically applicable. Following the documentation and investigative efforts, we have identified and presented three major theoretical and experimental paradigms that have enabled the state of developments on this subject to be established and the integration in this context of current models of occupational stress. The identification of stress mediators in general and those specific to teachers, as they appear characterized in the qualification literature, was the starting point for formulating hypotheses that formed the basis of the observational study. The extensive analysis of the literature on emotional stress management has led to the surprise of important guidelines and models that have been the theoretical framework for the development of the two intervention programmes proposed in the framework of the applicable research.*

**Key words:** stress; profession; social representation; work; teacher.

### 1. Introduction

Stress is perceived as a current, almost unavoidable problem that most people face daily on all levels. In this area, a particular sector, due to its many implications, is occupational stress. Despite the theoretical or practical application development addressed by specialists in various fields over time, the stress problem still offers, perhaps today more than ever, the possibility and the need for new analytical and investigative openings leading to more effective control of it. Among the professions heavily affected by stress, according to studies, teachers are in one of the leading places. The mental health of teachers has an impact on the instructional-educational act and implicitly on the students, on their personality. Research demonstrates the numerous implications of emotional stress in the etiology of various disorders and mental and emotional imbalances that affect the professional performance of teachers. Aware of the teacher's responsibility and the implications of some dysfunctions of his personality on the students, it was not by chance that the psychological examination was imposed.

The psychological evaluation of teachers over the last ten years (over 20,000 teachers evaluated) has confirmed once more that they are a professional category strongly affected by stress, highlighting its increasing values with each year.

Although over the past two decades, emotional stress has been studied in accordance with Emotional and Behavioral Rational Theory and has highlighted the role of mediators such as irrationality, called personality variables: neurosis, locus of control, self-confidence, yet the problem of psychological mediators of emotional stress in teachers remains with many

unknowns and therefore also the development of effective stress management programs is difficult.

## 2. Stress – conceptual boundaries and classifications

Stress is a natural manifestation, as usual, as are emotions, related to the adaptation of organisms (including humans) to environmental conditions. As is well known, stress was explored by The Austrian Canadian physician Hans Selye, a researcher and professor at McGill University in Montreal. Although Selye fulfilled the importance of discovering a new fundamental phenomenon of the life of organisms in the 30s of the 20th century, it was not until the 1970s of the same centuries that the multiple aspects of stress were clarified. Indeed, according to Selye, stress is a nonspecific, essential reaction for all living organisms. Through the three phases of stress, organisms organize their defences, but also adjust to the new environmental conditions that have generated it, ensuring survival.

The process called "stress" experiences an intensification in the reaction as both ontical and gnoseological object, argues I. Iamandescu (2002): on the one hand, we hear more and more about this aspect of everyday life, and, on the other hand, the problem of stress at the stage of the humanities (psychology, pedagogy, management, etc.) is increasingly being put. The fact is primarily due to a shift of emphasis – from the collective to the individual – specific to the post-Soviet society, which caused a number of mutations in the reality relationship index: man – society – production. (Sova, 2014)

Strong interdisciplinary research has put stress back into the spotlight of doctors, psychologists, pedagogues, therapists. A frontier discipline has been created – **stressology**. Specialized research institutes have been created, research programs that aim to investigate cellular-molecular structures to detect the profound mechanisms of stressful state. Theorists ranked stress by several criteria. after duration is acute and chronic; after stimuli –physical and psycho-social; by mode of manifestation –continuous and discontinuous, by scope –systematic and neuroendocrine; by the intensity of the stimuli –of under use and overuse; by the nature of the effects –eustress and distress; by type of activities –professional, political, medical, sports, military, by ontogenic –prenatal and postnatal stage (Macavei, 2002)

Jonas and Crocq (Jonas and Crocq, 1966) recommend the following definition of stress "Stress is a physiological and psychological reaction of alarm, mobilization and defense of the body or, better yet, the individual, the person from aggression, a threat or even –you might say –to an unusual lived situation."

Pitariu, H. (Pitariu and Smeion, 2003) characterizes stress as a "stimulus or response or as a result of stimulus-response interaction, an interaction that expresses some imbalance of the person's relationship with his environment".

## 3. Stress and stress response

According to the theory of response, the indication of the level of stress is possible from the tracking of character, amplitude of physiological, emotional and behavioral reactions. Thus, we can distinguish stress from the stranger and separate between short-term or transient reactions (which can have beneficial effects, stimulation and adaptation) and long-term or chronic reactions (which are often harmful). Analyzing observable reactions or stress indicators highlighted by different authors, we note the following categories: (Baban, 1998; Iamandescu, 1996):

At the neuro-physiological level, chemical-endocrine and immune: changes in blood pressure, reaction times, muscle tension (hypertonia), tics, hyperventilation, tachycardia, bradycardia, arrhythmias, increased blood pressure, the existence of stress hormones (catecholamines, cortisol), blood sugar, free fatty acids, cholesterol, etc., sweating, fatigue, upset stomach, headache, shaking of the hand, rapid growth in weight or loss, feeling

- On an emotional level: tight, anxious, depressive mimicry, frustration, anxiety, anger, hostility, nervousness, restlessness, depression, dissatisfaction, lability, culpability, demoralization, helplessness, alienation.
- Cognitive: short- and long-term memory impairment, decreased concentration, increased error and confusion, decreased decision-making, planning, organization and control capacity, reduced search for information, avoidance or denial, inhibitions and blockages, reduced creativity and obsessive and irrational idation, reduced tolerance to criticism.
- Behavioural: decreased performance, instability and occupational fluctuation, absenteeism, avoidance/escape, passivity/aggressiveness, intolerance, disagreement, deterioration of interpersonal relationships, accidents, excess food or loss of appetite, insomnia, response within "all or nothing", increased use of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tranquilizers, suicide attempts, difficulty to relax, disinterest in personal hygiene and physical appearance, accidents at home and work, unnecessary risks, gossip, criticism of others, verbal aggression, intimidation or harassment, unjustified outbursts, crying, hypersensitivity, irritability/moods, exaggerated reaction to problems, immature behaviors, refusal of tasks.

#### 4. Burnout - the consequence of stress

The term "burnout" has been taken up and developed by several scientists, but Maslach C. has the most important contribution with the following definition: "A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction of professional achievement occurring in professionally involved individuals with others resulting from a long-term involvement in demanding socio-professional activities with people and characterized by mental, emotional and physical exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased socio-professional performance".

After research conducted in recent years, a new definition has been discovered for this term (Shirom, 2003: 248) "Burnout is... an affective reaction to permanent stress whose central node is the gradual reduction, over time, of individual energy resources, including the expression of emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue and boredom, cognitive discouragement".

Burnout is a serious problem of modern society, which is not only reflected in problems in the workplace – such as an increase in the number of days of sick leave or absenteeism (Leiter and Maslach, 1998).

All these concerns, in recent years, for clarifying and methodologically perfecting the investigation of the phenomenon, have also brought with them a number of confusions and ambiguities. Such confusions arise between the concept of "burnout" and a number of other concepts with which it is in close connection: "stress", "fatigue", "depression" or "illness".

The same difference, given their origin, we find between fatigue and burnout. Also, if fatigue can be intrinsic to burnout, it is much more.

The most difficult demarcation, however, is between stress and burnout. Beyond the existing discussions on this subject we emphasize that burnout is "*a particular form of stress, severe stress, a severe manifestation of stress*" (Zlate, 2007: 603).

#### 5. Stressors in the organisational environment

Burduş, Căprărescu and Zorlean (1965: 134) assess that stress can come from the following stressors:

- 1) Pressing deadlines manifested as a discrepancy between the obligation to solve complex and/or difficult tasks and the time given to them;
- 2) Unapplied provisions and orders received from superiors or superior assembly;
- 3) The lack of attitudes or compulsory training of the post generates stress, in situations where the selection and promotion of staff is based on criteria other than those employed by professional competence;
- 4) Insufficient motivation reflects the conflict between personal expectations as a result of the results achieved and their perception, i.e. their different assessment by others;

- 5) Family pressures can generate stress as a result of the conflict, between time and interest in professional problems at the expense of family ones;
- 6) The desire for higher functions is felt as an effect of stress by any individual whose desires, aspirations, needs, exceed the strength and/or income of money offered by the position held;
- 7) Strong informed preparation that sets in motion unofficial information that is clearly at odds with information provided by official sources;
- 8) Deficiencies in job design;
- 9) Inefficient information system that provides information that lacks, inopportune, irrelevant causes a strong stress at the level of employees.

### **6. Emotional distress in teachers**

The teaching profession is a stressful one. Occupational stress is triggered by work organisation, work design and work relationships and is placed when job requirements do not match or exceed the worker's capacities, resources or needs, or when the information or skills of a worker or group do not match the expectations of an undertaking's organisational culture.

Professional stress for teachers is quite popularised, appearing on the basis of excessive demands, which are outside their resources and management strategies. Abusive demands are a source of danger to self-esteem, self-efficacy and mental well-being. Stress is considered to be the main cause of lack of professional satisfaction and exit from the system before retirement or even early retirement.

### **7. Distress mediators in teachers**

Mediators are in fact the main responsible for the level of emotional distress felt and not necessarily stressors. Starting with this idea and from the fact that, in a society that is constantly changing, the number of stressors in the educational environment that can be kept under expertise is limited and quite changeable, a multitude of studies have been centered on identifying the factors that actually intervene or just moderate the level of emotional distress in the case of teachers.

They found more research that investigated a string of personality or psychological characteristics of teachers, characteristics that may show a certain predisposition and/or participate in a higher degree of stress. Forman (1985) mentions that psychological variables that have revealed a positive correlation with didactic stress include: low self-efficacy, neurosis, introversion, a poor perception of one's own competence, a low professional self-concept, lack of audacity, lack of self-confidence, analytical cognitive style, external control locus. Teachers with authoritarian attitudes experience high levels of stress in terms of actual classroom activity.

Studies that have researched the coping strategies used by teachers in reducing didactic stress have found that decommitment, suppression of competitive activities and engagement in passive coping strategies (avoidance, alcohol consumption, etc.) lead to increased stress, active planning and engagement in active coping strategies (change of perspective, relaxation exercises, calming, etc.) contribute to stress relief. According to studies, the authors state that the coping methods used by teachers to cope with stress are: controlling emotions, avoiding confrontations, allocating time for particular tasks, relaxing after work hours, planning and prioritizing, discussing problems and expressing emotions, recognizing their own limits.

### **8. Social representations of work**

The interest of social psychology in the study of representations is relatively recent. The theory was launched by Serge Moscovici in 1961 by reassessing the Durkheimian concept of collective representation. Emphasizing the complex and systemic nature of social

representation, Moscovici defines it as a structured set of values, notions and practices relative to the object, aspects or dimensions of the social environment, which allows the adaptation of the individual in society, the direction of behaviors and communications, the selection of responses to environmental stimuli, etc. Social representations are not only attitudes, opinions or images, but also *suigeneris* theories or collective sciences intended to interpret and master the surrounding world. Moreover, they also propose a reconstruction of the real, a reshaping of the environment, both natural and social (Moscovici, 1961, 1969, 1976).

In opposition to collective representation, social representation is considered a reality endowed with an internal structure, subject to movement, transformation, evolution. It is, rather, a palpable, real phenomenon, rather than a concept. If in Durkheim collective representation encompassed science, religion, the modes of time and space, traditions, feelings and beliefs (in fact, the entire ethical production of mankind), the new sizing supports the specific, homogeneous and unitary character of representation, as "the result of melting into the social crucible of all these aspects", thus generating a new reality, different from the primary constituents. Social representation is a real phenomenon and not an imaginary one, and its study involves an epistemic status, a field of research, specific methods, and operating laws (Neculau and Curelaru, 2004).

There are undoubtedly a number of difficulties that stand in the way of the precise clarification of the notion, caused, in particular, by the complexity and rapid dynamics of the theory, by the poor definition of the field of research, by the location at the intersection of some sciences and the multitude of methods of approach (Doise, 1990) Thus, social representation comprises an infinite number of aspects, extremely diverse elements that are studied separately in "traditional" psychology : cognitive, ideological elements, beliefs, norms, values, opinions, attitudes, images, etc. (Ferreol, 1998). Then there are a number of problems caused by the uncertainty of borders that separate social representation from other "related" concepts, such as opinions, attitudes, social cognitions, social perceptions, etc. Also, its mixed position, when crossing some sociological concepts with others, psychological, as Moscovici observes, makes the phenomenon difficult to define. He enters both the social and psychological sphere, thus using theoretical methods and frameworks from both sciences (Jodelet, 1989). There is, moreover, in the case of social representation, a variety of methods of approach, both data collection and statistical processing and interpretation.

The theory has evolved with a strong applicative character. Thus, the representations of numerous and varied social objects, such as: intelligence, medicine (AIDS, disease, madness, disability, etc.), sexuality and gender, social organization and institutions, politics (political system, law, democracy, status institutions, homeland, etc.), technology (informatics, radioactivity, etc.) were studied. (De Rosa, 1990; Moonner, 1993; Dry, 2001; Roussiau and Bonaardi, 2001).

#### Sources of stress in the pre-university environment

Research has indicated that the main sources of stress of teachers are:

- financial restrictions on pay (economic pressure)
- teaching difficulties due to the curriculum too loaded,
- difficulties in managing time,
- the number of pupils in the class,
- indiscipline of some students,
- assessment of pupils,
- school climate,
- relationships with the parents of some pupils,
- financial restrictions on the material resources of the school,
- autocratic leadership of the school, collegial relations,
- physical and verbal violence of some pupils.

Eeve (1989) identified five major changes in society, which imposed a number of pressures on teachers, thus creating reasons justifying the growing interest in the study of the phenomenon of stress in this field:

1. transforming the teacher's traditional role as a simple social integration agent of the younger generation,
2. increasing contradictions regarding the role of the teacher,
3. changing the attitude of society in general towards teachers,
4. doubt about the objectives of the education system and the production of knowledge,
5. deterioration of the teacher's image.

### **9. Objectives**

The specific objectives of the research are:

1. Identification of social representations of work in teachers, by gender, age and function;
2. Identification of strategies for managing occupational stress by gender, age and function;
3. Identification of sources of stress in the pre-university environment by gender, age and function.
4. Identifying the level of emotional distress experienced by teachers, by gender, age and function.

### **10. Assumptions**

Hs<sub>1</sub> - It is presumed that there are differences in age and function in the social representation of work.

Hs<sub>2</sub> - Differences in age and function in stress management strategies are presumed to exist.

Hs<sub>3</sub> - Sources of stress are presumed to be perceived differently at the level of age and function.

Hs<sub>4</sub> - It is presumed that there are significant differences in age and function in terms of emotional distress.

Hs<sub>5</sub> - It is presumed that there is a correlation between stress management strategies associated with stressors and ways of representing work

Hs<sub>6</sub> - It is assumed that there is a correlation between stress management strategies associated with stressors and emotional distress.

Hs<sub>7</sub> - It is presumed that there is a correlation between sources of stress and stress management strategies.

### **11. Study participants and research tools**

The subjects of the research were 60 teachers from the Romanian pre-university environment, of which 30 were educators and 30 were teachers. All participants were female.

Four tools were used to carry out this study: PDE (emotional distress profile), "social representation of work" questionnaire (developed by Zaharia D.V., 2007), "professional stress management strategies" questionnaire (developed by Zaharia, 2007) and "sources of stress in the pre-university environment" (developed by Zaharia, 2007).

### **12. Verification of assumptions**

**Hs<sub>1</sub> - It is presumed that there are differences in age and function in the social representation of work.**

**Hypothesis 1. Test Statistics** – there is no significant difference between the function of educator and the function of teacher, the degree of significance is 0.657, greater than 0.005, so the hypothesis is not confirmed.

**Table 1: Test Statistics**

	RSMTotal
Mann-Whitney U	420,000
Wilcoxon W	885,000
Z	-,444
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,657

**Table 2: Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
S G S P T O T A L	Equal variances assumed	,203	,654	,046	58	,963	,10000	2,17405	-4,25183	4,45183
	Equal variances not assumed			,046	56,149	,963	,10000	2,17405	-4,25488	4,45488

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that there are differences in age and function in terms of the social representation of work has not been confirmed. The results of the study subjects were almost identical.

After analysing the results, I can say that both educators and teachers have roughly the same picture of work.

Social representation contributes decisively to the processes of formation of conduct, orientation behaviours and social interactions. Consisting of a set of information, beliefs, opinions and attitudes in relation to a particular social object, this set of elements is organised and structured to some extent the same for the two teaching functions analysed.

The work of the teacher in the pre-university environment is a polymorphic social object, manifested by a diversity of cognitions, capable of generating new meanings and reassessments in the context of current social changes.

**H<sub>s2</sub> - Differences in age and function in stress management strategies are presumed to exist.**

**Hypothesis 2. Independent Samples Test** – According to the table we note that the significance threshold is 0.654, greater than 0.05, which means that the variability between the two variables - the function of educator and the function of teacher - is about the same, so it is not statistically significant. The hypothesis is not confirmed.

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that there are differences in age and function in terms of stress management strategies has not been confirmed. The comparative analysis between teaching functions (educators and teachers) of stress management strategies shows that both educators and teachers use in the same way strategies to avoid the problem, to strategies for seeking social support, to strategies for positive relapse of situations, to active strategies, but also to passive waiting.

This result may be due to the fact that both educators and teachers use the same methods of managing stress in the educational environment, such as: organizing the activities carried out in advance, imposing clear and concise objectives, informing on all activity plans, positive thinking, motivation, relaxation, etc.

**Hs3 - Sources of stress are presumed to be perceived differently at the level of age and function.**

According to the table we note that the significance threshold is 0.594, greater than 0.05, which means that the variability between the two variables is approximately the same, so it is not statistically significant. The hypothesis is not confirmed.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SSMP TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	,287	,594	,000	58	1,000	,00000	3,02532	-6,05584	6,05584
	Equal variances not assumed			,000	57,575	1,000	,00000	3,02532	-6,05679	6,05679

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that sources of stress are perceived differently at the level of age and function has not been confirmed.

We have not achieved any statistically significant difference sending the age of the subjects.

I believe that this result is because both educators and teachers have a volume of tasks at a close level, regardless of their age. Most teachers at one point believe that the service requires more than they can bear, the pressure to have so many students around, so many tasks to perform in a school year, is a source of stress. Sometimes they resort to how to resist stress, avoiding it and using sources of stress management.

**Hs4 - It is presumed that there are significant differences in age and function in terms of emotional distress.**

The degree of significance is 0.045, less than 0.05, which means that there is a significant difference between the two variables. The hypothesis is confirmed.

**Table 4: Test Statistics**

	PDEtotal
Mann-Whitney U	314,500
Wilcoxon W	779,500
Z	-2,006
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,045

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that there are significant differences in age and function in terms of emotional distress was confirmed.

Teachers over the age of 40 manage better distress in positive emotions and negative emotions than teachers in their 40s.

This result may be due to the fact that people in the educational environment over the age of 40 have more experience in managing the emotions experienced in the workplace.

Events in the department over the years give staff a better understanding and acceptance of both positive and negative emotions.

**H<sub>5</sub> - It is presumed that there is a negative correlation between stress management strategies associated with stressors and ways of representing work**

The existence of a significant negative correlation (-0.301) is observed, thus the hypothesis is confirmed.

**Table 5: Correlation**

		RSM Total	SGSP Total
Sperman's rho	RSM Total	Correlation Coefficient	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,301*
		N	60
	SGSP Total	Correlation Coefficient	-,301*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,019
		N	60

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that there is a negative correlation between stress management strategies associated with stressors and ways of representing work was confirmed.

According to the statistical data obtained, we see a significant negative correlation between the two variables. This result shows us that when stressors present in the workplace increase, the general characteristics for the social representation of work decrease.

The study has made us better understand the actions and behaviours of teachers in the pre-university environment. Social representation guides their actions and behaviours, and through stress management strategies a close link is made between the two variables.

The analysis of the links between stress management strategies and social representation reveals correlations only between the pressure of time as a stressor and several dimensions of the social representation of work.

One might say that as work means for a person a means of obtaining financial satisfaction or a way of maintaining health, the less resort that person will resort to adopting a passive attitude towards stressors.

**H<sub>6</sub> - It is assumed that there is a positive correlation between stress management strategies associated with stressors and emotional distress.**

The existence of a statistically insignificant positive correlation (0.194) is observed because it is less than 0.4 at a signification threshold of 0.138, so the hypothesis is not confirmed.

**Table 6: Correlation**

		PDE total	SGSP total
Sperman's rho	PDE total	Correlation Coefficient	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,194
		N	60
	SGSP total	Correlation Coefficient	,194
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,138
		N	60

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that there is a positive correlation between stress management strategies associated with stressors and emotional distress has not been confirmed.

By analyzing the data, we conclude that when stressors increase, the degree of emotional distress also increases. The biggest stressor in the educational environment is the pressure of time, and that should be a wake-up call at the institution level. When a stressor occurs, a number of negative emotions and behaviors are automatically triggered, so as the stressors are more and more, teachers experience a very high level of distress.

**Hs7 - It is presumed that there is a positive correlation between sources of stress and stress management strategies.**

There is a statistically insignificant positive correlation (0.133) weak because it is less than 0.4 at a significance threshold of 0.312, so the hypothesis is not confirmed.

**Table 7: Correlations**

			SGSP TOTAL	SSMP TOTAL
Sperman's rho	SGSP Total	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,133
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,312
		N	60	60
	SSMP Total	Correlation Coefficient	,133	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,312	.
		N	60	60

From the statistical analysis of the data, the presumption that there is a positive correlation between sources of stress and stress management strategies has not been confirmed. The correlations between the main sources of stress and stress management strategies indicate the existence of links between the two types of variables. The correlational nature of the analyses does not allow us to establish a sense of influence from one variable to another. On the one hand, the perception of certain sources of stress can activate certain stress management strategies; on the other hand, people's preference for a particular stress management strategy may diminish or even reverse the impact of some sources of stress, but not others.

**Conclusions**

This paper is part of the concerns about work stress and social representations of work in teachers. In presenting the theoretical aspects underlying the study we emphasized the theoretical perspectives that try to explain and describe the role of stress. The models of occupational stress developed in recent times have integrated the acquisition sourness of cognitive stress theory. Many models of stress include as dimensions the evaluation processes and individual differences that moderate the relationship between stressors and reactions.

Currently emotions have gained importance, in the study of occupational stress, within organizational researchers, a proof being the inclusion and investigation of different types of emotions (e.g. depression, burnout, satisfaction with work).

As regards the social representation of work and the possible differences between the teaching functions subject to the test (at the level of the variable age and function) we have not recorded spectacular results. To some extent, the lack of larger differences does not surprise us, because the ingested subjects are relatively homogeneous. It is known from other studies relating to social representations that different positions can be identified in situations of polarization of opinions or the presence of variables that generate large attitudinal cleavages in

the representational field. In our case, membership in the same professional category generates rather similarities. Referring to the analysis of stress-generating factors in the Romanian pre-university environment, we noticed that the realization of various tasks under the pressure of time seems to be the most powerful source of stress, followed by concerns about the professional future. Interestingly, each of these two main sources of stress is significantly associated with two stress management strategies. Concerns about the professional future are another important source of stress associated with two coping strategies: seeking social support and avoiding focusing on the problem. If the perception of a particular source of stress really encourages the person to resort to certain coping strategies, then it would be interesting to investigate what type of social support people are looking for from their professional future – are they seeking emotional, informational or organizational support?

We can say that stress is impossible to avoid, because life itself is stress. Performance pressure, the throbbing pace of daily life, crowding and noise pollution, overloading of responsibilities, rapid changes are just a few examples of what induces stress, which, if it exceeds a certain intensity, becomes toxic, affecting health and mental well-being.

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## **CHILD MORTALITY COMBAT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BAFUT SUB-DIVISION, MEZAM DIVISION, NORTH WEST REGION, CAMEROON**

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**Abstract:** *Mortality of children under the age of five has been the main target of public health policies worldwide. Bafut Sub-division found in the Northwest Region of Cameroon is characterised by high infant and child mortality confirmed by statistics gotten from the Bafut District Hospital and many other health centres in this locality. This study aims at examining the situation of child mortality and to outline the different factors associated with child mortality in Bafut Sub-division. The research methodology adopted for this study involved the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data collected was from primary sources (field observation, administration of questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews) and secondary sources (published and unpublished works, and the internet). The findings of the study reveal that, there is a downward movement in the mortality trend in Bafut Sub-division and Cameroon. Malaria is seen as the main cause of child mortality in Bafut. This is confirmed by the pearson's chi square, with the degree of freedom being 6 at a significant level of 0.05, the critical value was 5% while the calculated value measured at 614.8 which is validated, stating that, malaria is the main cause of child mortality in Bafut Sub-division. Results from our investigation also show that strategies put in place to combat child mortality have contributed so much on the reduction of child death which has led to the development of Bafut Sub-division. Considering the fact that the strategies adopted cannot fully solve the problem, there is therefore the need for all stakeholders to be actively involved in the implementation of the different adaptation strategies and the recommendations mentioned in this document such as free vaccination of children less than five year, provision of treated mosquito net, antenatal health education, free treatment of malaria for pregnant women and under five children, health campaigns and sensitization and availability of first aid boxes in schools*

**Key words:** child mortality; health; combating agents; strategies development.

### **1. Introduction**

The right to health is a fundamental part of the Human Rights declaration of 1948 (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008). Improving child survival has been a priority for both policy makers and health advocates worldwide. One of these priorities is the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) of which one of them calls for a reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates (Sustainable Development Goal 3). A health transition observed globally indicates that under-five mortality had declined by 1.8 per cent between 1990 and 2000 (UNICEF, 2012). This improvement has increased to 3.2 per cent between 2000 and 2011 signifying a significant progress in child survival. However, under-

five deaths remain high in the sub-Saharan Africa region where 1 in 9 children dies before the age of five (UNIGME, 2012).

Mortality of children under the age of five has been the main target of public health policies and is a common indicator of mortality levels, especially in developing countries (Gakusi and Garenne 2006). United Nations Demographic year-book in 1979 shows that a very rough estimate of the current infant mortality rate is about 100: fewer than 20 in most of the developed countries, below 10 in a few, and well over 100 in many Asian and African countries. These high rates, which are usually estimates, are averages. In some years, the rates are at least 200 to 250 (one child in four) in some geographic areas and among some ethnic groups. The worldwide variation is such that in Japan and Scandinavia, less than one child in a hundred dies in infancy.

It is also viewed as an indicator of the level of development, health and socioeconomic status of the population. Disparities in child health between and within countries have persisted and widened considerably during the last few decades (Bryce et al, 2006; Moser et al, 2005).

The reduction of these disparities is a key goal of most developing countries' public health policies, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (Lawn et al, 2007). (Carvalho and Wood, 1978), explain that it is often difficult to know either current levels or the pace of decline in infant mortality in developing countries. Improvements in registration systems and surveys increase the number of deaths reported and can conceal a reduction in mortality, but where declines have recorded, they have been approximately as the same rate as in the developed countries. It is well recognized that disparities in child health outcomes may arise not only from differences in the characteristics of the families that children are born into but also from differences in the socio-economic attributes of the communities where they live (Fotso and Kuate-Defo, 2005; Griffiths et al, 2004; Kravdal, 2004; Ladusingh and Singh, 2006; Montgomery and Hewett, 2005; Robert, 1999; Sastry, 1996).

Gwatkin (1980) talked on an increase in the infant mortality rate from 43-48 which was reported from Sri Lanka after a period of decline that has lasted more than thirty years. Reliable time-series on mortality are generally not available for developing countries, but some analysts find that rates appear to be stabilizing at relatively high levels. Dyson (1977, p. 288), examines that estimates of child mortality suggest that when infant mortality is high, the risk of death may also be quite high in the second and third year of life. The risk is associated with the diarrhea and malnutrition that occurred so frequently when weaning foods are both inadequate and a source of infection. Estimated rates that are approximately 40 per 1000 children in tropical Africa are more than 40 times higher than rates in developed regions. Bafut sub-division is experiencing the same situation as children died every year due to malnutrition and infections. This is mostly seen in the lower areas of Bafut ("Mbouti").

The predominant causes of child deaths worldwide are diarrhea, pneumonia and malaria. Cause of death is defined as "disease or injury which initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death" (International Classification of Diseases 2000). The renewed focus on underlying causes of death has led to the emergence of the buzz-phrase social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people live, and that affect their opportunities to leave healthy lives (Labonté and Schrecker, 2007). Examples of social determinants of health are education, income, social status, physical environment and housing conditions, social support networks, genetics and gender, but also health systems and services (World Health Organization, 2011e). So far as Bafut is concern, malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia are the main causes of child death. Pneumonia is rampant during the first year of live (infant mortality).

Previous birth interval is correlated with child survival. There is a general thought that longer birth intervals improve the survival chance of the following children (Bhalotra and van Soest, 2008; Majumder et al, 1997; Davanzo and Habicht, 1986; Koenig et al, 1990; Pebley and Stupp, 1987; Murphy and Wang, 2001). Short preceding birth interval influences child mortality through three mechanisms. First, closely spaced births cause depletion of the mother. Second,

mechanism is through sibling competition and the third is transition of infectious diseases between the closely spaced children (Majumder et al, 1997).

The first one is the biological and the other two are behavioral effects of short preceding birth interval (Koenig et al, 1990). Maternal depletion occurs as a result of repeated and closely spaced pregnancies. Closely spaced pregnancies do not give the mother enough time to recover from the adverse physiologic and nutritional demands related to pregnancy (Koenig et al, 1990). The child who is born in such an environment suffers from low birth weight, short duration of gestation and growth retardation (Majumder et al, 1997). This mechanism is effective in the early stages of life (Koenig et al. 1990). This situation is very clear in Bafut as more than 50% of mothers that had more than two children have birth intervals that range from 1-2 years and about 45% of them had experienced history of child death.

Dyson (1977), the level of education of the mother has been a very strong prediction of infant and child mortality rates. As the education of mother increases, rates go down; this consistent finding is attributed in part to improvements in a mother's ability to provide care, including use of health services, and in part to the correlation of education with other indicators of living conditions and access to resources. Maternal education is an important determinant of infant and child mortality and is mostly used as a proxy for socio-economic status of mother. Less educated mothers are found to experience more child mortality (Murphy and Wang, 2001).

There are several explanations made for the ways which maternal education influences child health. More educated women adopt simple health knowledge contrary to fatalistic acceptance of health outcomes; they adopt alternatives in child care and recent treatments. They can feed their children and practice child care more appropriately. Educated women are more capable of handling modern world. Communication with doctors and nurses should be easier for educated women.

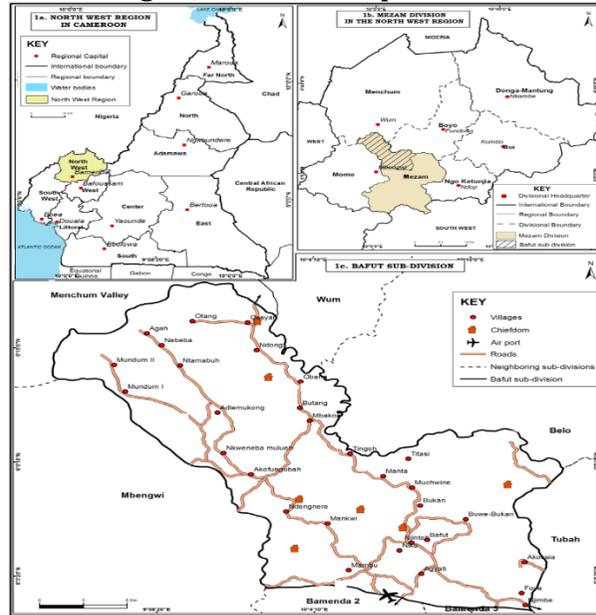
Educated women may change traditional balance of family relationships. In different countries, education may have an effect over child health through a different channel (Caldwell, 1979). Also educated mothers may use health inputs more productively and effectively, may have better information of best allocation of health inputs, may have more family resources in consequence of marrying wealthier men or working outside, and may have different preferences for child health.

In another study conducted by Hobcraft, the survival chances of children born to educated mothers are argued to be greater due to several demographic reasons. Educated mothers tend to marry and have children later and have fewer children; therefore the excess risk of infant mortality for teenage mothers is reduced. Also educated mothers experience lower maternal mortality and per birth maternal mortality because of greater usage of health services, avoiding risky pregnancies and of experiencing fewer pregnancies and children without mothers are less likely to survive (Hobcraft,1993). This confirms the situation in Bafut with about 55% of mothers who are class seven school dropouts which are exposed to the effects of child mortality

## **2. Regional Setting**

Bafut is located in Mezam Division of the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon. It is situated at about 20km from Bamenda town along the road to Wum in Menchum Division. Bafut lies between longitudes 10° 00' and 10° 13' East and latitudes 6° 05' and 6° 10' North of the equator. It covers a surface area of about 425km<sup>2</sup> of land and a population of over 123,362 (Census 2005). Bafut is situated in an elevated basin surrounded by the Oshie-Ngie range to the West and the Bamenda, Bansa, Oku and Njinikom high plateau to the East.

**Figure 1: Location map of Bafut**



Source: National Institute of Statistics, (2018).

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Sampling design and techniques

The data collected from interviews, questionnaires and observations was analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 window version by Georgia. These data are presented in the form of tables, graphs, bar charts and histograms. The Chi Square correlation was used to evaluate, test and validate the association between dependent and independent variables. P value was set to be statistically significant at 0.05. We deemed this method appropriate to use because it provides relationship that might exist between dependent and independent variables given that they are qualitative information.

The targeted population consisted of women at childbearing age (16-45 years) who had once given birth, randomly selected from nine villages namely: Niko, Mambu, Obang, Manji, Mundum II, Akofunguba, Njinteh, Tingoh and Akossia. This population was chosen because it provided easy accessibility to work with. In each village, a sample size was chosen with respect to the population of that village, which ranges from twenty to twenty-five women making a total of two hundred women (200 questionnaires). To get the sample size of the questionnaire, the following formula will be use. Sample size of questionnaire=number of questionnaires administered in each village divided by the total number of questionnaires multiply by 100. For instance, Niko will be calculated as follows:  $Niko \frac{25}{200} \times 100 = 12.5$ .

**Table 1: Sample size of questionnaire in Bafut Sub-division**

Village	Number of questionnaires	% of questionnaire
Niko	25	12.5
Tingoh	20	10
Akofunguba	20	10
Obang	20	10
Mundum II	20	10
Mambu	25	12.5

Manji	25	12.5
Akossia	25	12.5
Njinteh	20	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: conceived by the author (2018)

The simple random sampling and the cluster sampling techniques were used to realise this work. The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the villages mentioned above to interview child bearing mothers using questionnaires. This sample technique was used to avoid bias while the cluster sample technique was used in hospitals and health centres where women gathered for antenatal lectures. The descriptive method was chosen because it was easier to read and understand qualitative and quantitative data collected from primary and secondary sources to show the evolution of child mortality.

#### 4. Findings

##### 4.1. Trends and levels of child mortality in Bafut Sub-division

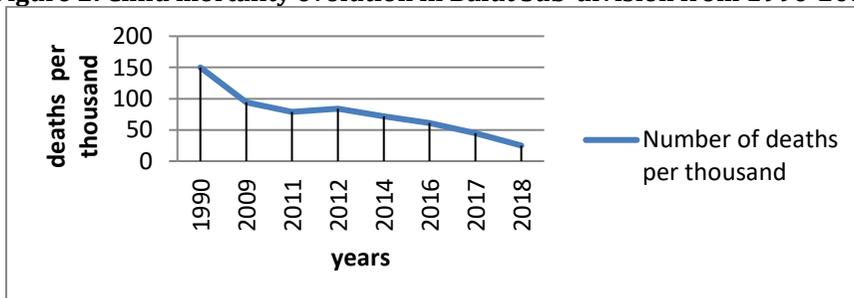
Bafut Sub-division is characterized by high infant and child mortality rates as compared to some rural areas of Cameroon (Bafut District Hospital, 2008). Statistics gotten from the different DHS/MICS and interviews of health personnel show that, between the 1980s and 1990s, child mortality rates were very high (150 deaths per 1000 live births) but have taken a regressive turn around as the situation is now better. The high child mortality rates within these periods were due largely to the lack of health facilities in many areas in Bafut Sub-division. Mundum is a good example where no health facilities existed and a host of many far-off villages until three years ago that one health center was created in Mundum II. In these health centers, there is an acute shortage of trained personnels and some important health equipments. Accessibility is also a great problem especially when it came to the transportation of pregnant women in labour to the nearest hospital. This is seen in many far off villages such as: Akofunguba, Agah, Otang, Bukari, Titasi, Ademukong, Acheini, where pregnant women brave unfavorable conditions, long distances through bad roads before getting to the nearest health center or hospital. Obsolete traditional methods and traditional doctors that do not have any medical experience deliver women under very unhygienic conditions thereby causing high child mortality. The low literacy rate of women and poverty also contributed much to child mortality in Bafut.

**Table 2: Trends in child mortality in Bafut Sub-division from 1990-2015**

Years	1990	2009	2011	2012	2014	2016	2017	2018
Numbers	150	94	79	84	72	61	45	25

Source: Bafut health district, 2018.

**Figure 2: Child mortality evolution in Bafut Sub-division from 1990-2018**



Source: Fieldwork statistics (2018).

The reduction in trends of child mortality in Bafut Sub-division is as a result of the creation of more qualified health facilities equipped with recent health technology and highly qualified health personnel combined with the efforts of funding institutions like; PLAN Cameroon, the ministry of health, international organizations like WHO, UNICEF and financial institutions like; The World Bank and the Bafut Cooperative Credit Union. Diplomatic assistance provided through the embassies and consulates of many countries like the UK, USA, and Japan. We cannot minimize the efforts of the local community health workers in combating this phenomenon as they sensitize the public through village meetings and seeking financial contributions through fun raisings towards the wiping away of this situation. The church plays a very important participatory role in combating this social ill through its health facilities like the Presbyterian Mission Health Services, the Catholic Mission Health Services and the Baptist Mission Health Services.

**4.2. Causes of child mortality in Bafut Sub-division**

Most of the women in Bafut confirmed that they had experienced history of child death. 78 out of 200 respondents have lost at least a child making 39%. This percentage is relatively high. This shows that out of 20 women questioned at least 7 of them have experienced child death. 122 of this population confirmed not to experience it.

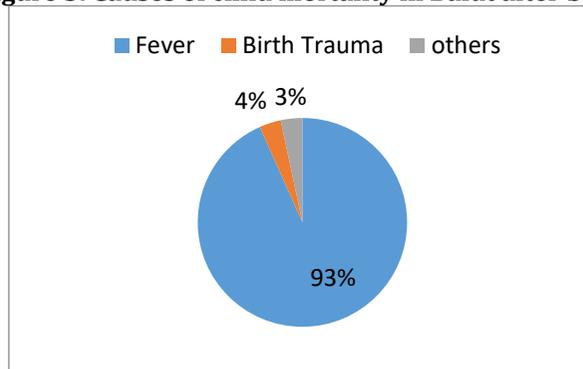
**Table 3: Percentage of child mortality in Bafut**  
**Question: have you experienced child mortality?**

Response	Respondents	%
Yes	78	39
No	122	61
Total	200	100

Source: Fieldwork 2018

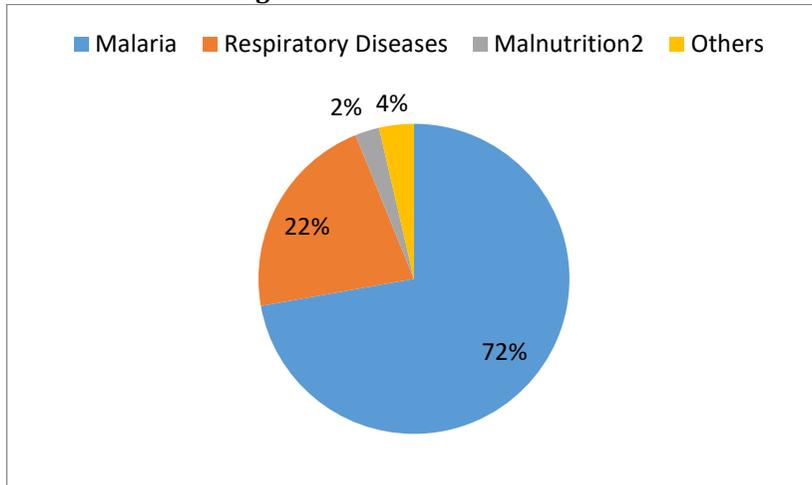
Out of the 78 children that died, 50 were normal when they were being given birth to and 28 were not normal making 64.1% and 35.9% respectively. 2.56% died before the date of birth, 20.52% died during birth and 76.92% died after birth. Most of the deaths that occurred during birth were caused by prolong labour and birth trauma which falls under neonatal deaths mean while 93% of children who died after birth was due to fever and 72% of the fever infection died because of malaria infection, 22% was respiratory infection, 2% was as a result of malnutrition and 4% for other illnesses. (Figures 3 and 4). It was also realized that, 66.67% of the deaths are male and 33.33% female. This shows that the male child is more likely to die than the female child.

**Figure 3: Causes of child mortality in Bafut after birth**



Source: Field work statistics, 2018

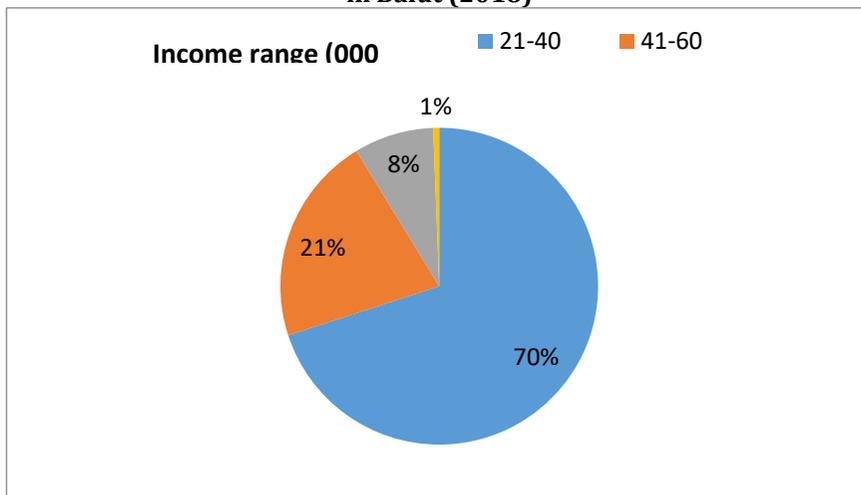
**Figure 4: Causes of child fever**



Source: Field statistics, 2018

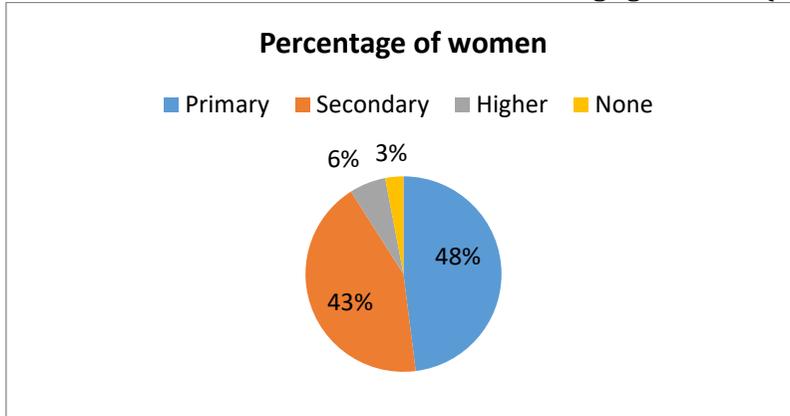
Table 5 below shows that, 70% of mothers at child bearing age have income that ranges from 21000-40,000 CFA per month. The mortality rate reduces as income levels of the mothers improve thereby making low income levels or poverty to influence child mortality amongst women negatively. Figure 6 shows that, the number of women who attended primary education was 96 making a total of 48%, secondary school was 86 making 43%, only 12 women succeeded to attain higher education making 6% and 6 making 3% did not even go to school.

**Figure 5: Average monthly income distribution per women at child bearing age in Bafut (2018)**



Source: Field work statistics, 2018

**Figure 6: Educational level of women at child bearing age in Bafut (2018)**



Source: Field work statistics, 2018

It was evident that low levels of education amongst child bearing mothers greatly influenced the rate of child mortality in Bafut.

Most of the roads in Bafut are not tarred and are seasonal. During the raining season, some of these roads like the road leading to Mundum II, Akossia, Ndung just to name a few are not motorable and this causes mothers to trek for very long distances to go to health centres and hospitals for antenatal check-ups since these health services are unevenly distributed in the area. Fieldwork shows that, (18.8%) of women in Bafut do not attend antenatal clinic due to bad state of roads which even leads to cases of miscarriages. From field statistics, 29% of women in Bafut deliver on the road before reaching the hospital.

**Photo 1 : Deplorable roads in Bafut Sub-division**



Taking a view at the photo1, one can confirm that it will be very risky for a pregnant woman or women to travel through this bad state of road because it can lead to miscarriages or even complications during birth. 18.8% of women in Bafut complained of the difficulties encountered to attend antenatal check-ups during the rainy season due to the bad state of roads.

### **4.3. Child mortality combating stakeholders**

Child mortality combat reflects the degree to which society exercises the most fundamental human right through the institutions put in place to effect these changes. The various stakeholders involved in child mortality combating in the area include; the government, the mission, the Bafut Coperative Credit Union and the community. The role of each of these stakeholders is discussed in this section.

#### **4.3.1. The Government**

The Cameroon health system is comprised of the public, private and denominational sectors. At a central level, health is the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Health with the assistance of other ministries and institutions that fulfill certain tasks in the health sector, such as the Ministry of Higher Education in charge of the training of medical personnel (doctors, nurses), while the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation is in charge of health research. The Ministry of Public Health is divided into four central divisions: the Department of Planning, Surveys and Statistics, Public Health Services: the Department of Preventive Medicine and the Department of Public Hygiene. The Cameroon State health organization works at three different levels. The lowest is made up of health centers and specialized centers that ensure health care for the population at the local level, and district hospitals offering general medical services and the highest level of state public health services being the central regional hospitals, which are equipped with specialized medical services especially in the maternity section. The government through the ministries of health and institutions work relentlessly to curb child mortality in the country at large and in Bafut Sub-division in particular.

#### **5.3.2. The missions**

To enable the entire population of Bafut enjoy good health and contribute constructively to efforts at raising growth and development, the government permits the missions to provide health facilities especially in remote areas such as: Maternal health and infant health, disease control, promoting health and development. Implementation of these programs have greatly contributed in improving mother and child health, controlling/containing major pandemics like HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases amongst mothers and children, cultivate healthy behaviours in the entire population and strengthen the provision of health services and care in Bafut Sub-division.

Provision of immunization service has improved. This strategy put in place by the Cameroon government through health facilities in the Bafut health area provides immunization services in fixed strategy less than 5 km, advanced strategy between 5 and 20km, mobile strategy of more than 20 km performed by community health assistants from door to door to increase the rate of vaccination coverage among children 0 to 11 months and among pregnant women.

Fieldwork shows that, the proportion of children below five years sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets has increased to about 80% as per many households. All health care services in the communities are effectively implementing the malaria management package of mosquito nets to about 80% in at least 4/5 of the health care areas of each health care unit within the health district. The proportion of health care facilities implementing malaria management norms and standards is growing and has reached 60% in at least 4/5 of the health care district (BDH 2018).

The Updated health map is made available and is a guide for the delivery of services and health care to every corner of the health district. This map will enable easy diffusion of ideas, techniques and personnel to the most remote areas of the health district. It is also going to be a good medium through which vaccination campaigns can be conducted as a strategy.

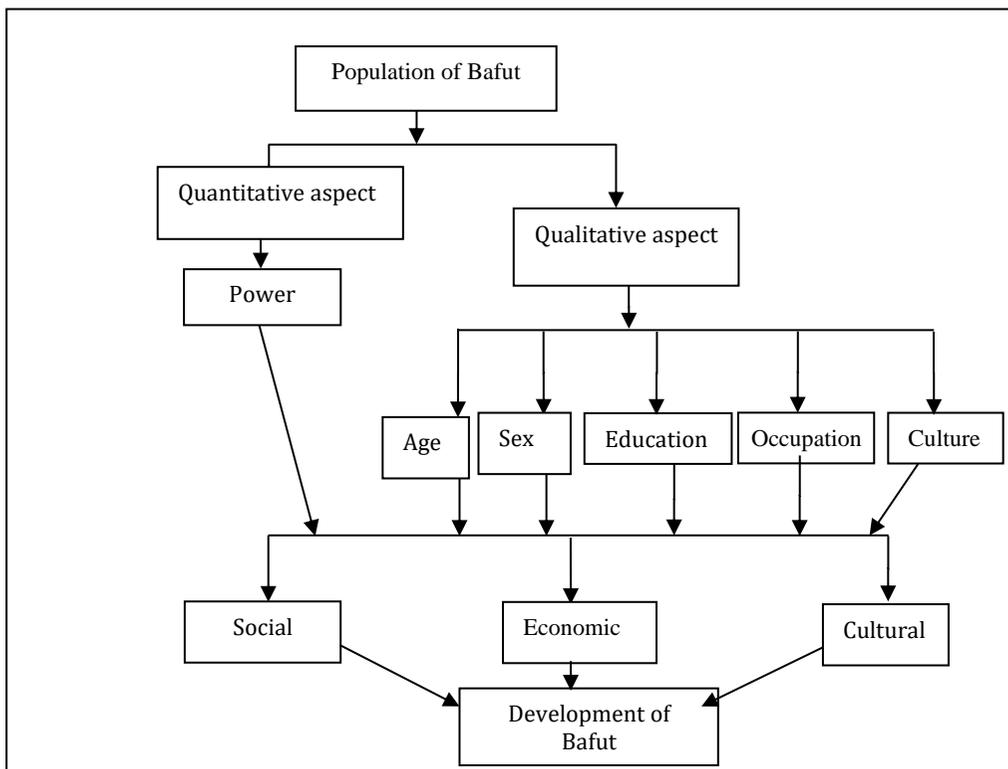


**6. Combat impacts on the development of Bafut Sub-division**

Health is wealth and remains the foundation for any development. This widely recognised fact has, of course, led to the adoption of the policy of “Health for all” and “All for Health”. This has been in a bit to better the situation of humanity as a healthy condition cannot be exchanged for any wealth. The United Nations Development Program defines development as “to live long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community”. Seers (1972) stipulated that development involved a change in the social, economic, political and cultural resources of the country. This is done via the creation of jobs and by this; incomes will change positively leading to the well-being of the people. Development is therefore a process or the result of transforming a resource for the welfare of man. It is a process by which something is made to grow or to evolve to a more complete, complex or desirable standard. Every development is a transformation process from a raw to a refined material. For example oil refinery in Bafut that processes palm nuts into palm oil for local consumption.

The population of Bafut Sub-division plays a vital role in the development of the area. Looking at the population of Bafut, we need to consider the population numbers in two aspects; the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of the population to foster development. In the quantitative aspect, we are looking at the total population of Bafut Sub-division which has contributed so much on the economic, social and cultural development of this municipality. On the other hand, the qualitative aspect of the population of Bafut is based on the demographic characteristics of the population such as age, sex, occupation, education and the cultural background, (figure 8)

**Figure 8: The different aspects of the population of Bafut that have contributed to the development of the area**



Source: Authors' conception, (2018)

## 7. Recommendations

According to the findings of this study, child spacing will help reduce both infant and child deaths. There is therefore a need to sensitize people in Bafut Sub-division on the importance of child spacing (2-4 years) than the 1 to 2 years spacing that is practice presently and to implement health programs that will encourage the use of contraception for child spacing. Results suggest that, mothers' education should be made more easily accessible to women especially in the lower Bafut and the upper Mundum and Akofunguba areas. This will help women to be independent and able to make good decisions regarding child health. Education (at least secondary) and the creation of job opportunities in Bafut Sub-division as a whole will also help women get employment thereby improving their economic status.

More health services should be created in Bafut especially in the interior villages such as Mundum II, Akofunguba, Akossia, Ndung, Buwe Bukari, Tingoh, Mbakong, Mankanikong, Mangwi just to name a few so that mothers should avoid travelling for long distances during pregnancy which at times leads to miscarriages. The government should subsidize these services so that even the poor can also afford them. More emphasis should also be laid on the transport network of Bafut Sub-division. The government, NGOs and the local authorities should improve on the road network to ease accessibility.

The government of Cameroon and organizations involved in the health sectors should organize conferences and seminars in Bafut where women should be educated with the use of birth control methods and contraceptives to limit closely spaced pregnancies so as to avoid child mortality. Women in Bafut should have a strong involvement in employment opportunities either in the public or private sector. This is because employment opportunities of women lower child death according to the results of this study. When a woman has a well-paid job, she will be able to afford for the health facilities of the child especially in case where the partner is dead or separated.

The government through the ministry of public health should make available the distribution of health registers to all hospitals and health centers for the registration of all information concerning the health of the citizens in the various health centers in Cameroon and Bafut in particular.

## 8. Conclusion

This study, 'child mortality combat in the development of Bafut Sub-division,' sought to outline and examine the situation of child mortality in Bafut, to identify and examine factors associated with child mortality in Bafut Sub-division and to assess the strategies put in place by different stakeholders to combat it and how it has contributed to the development of the area. It used the 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011 CDHS and the MICS. The chi square test was applied to test and validate the different hypotheses. The results support that Bafut Sub-division is experiencing a reduction in child mortality rate. Malaria has been found to be the most significant associated factor of child mortality in Bafut Sub-division and in Cameroon in general. About 71.4% of deaths below five years in Bafut are caused by malaria (fieldwork 2018). Other significant factors include; mother's education, sex of the child, marital status of the mother, mother's age at time of birth of the child, fathers' education, length of the preceding birth interval, mother's and father's occupation, weight of the child, drinking and smoking habit of the mother. A slim percentage of environmental factors such as flood, thunder storm and fire accidents have been found to have significantly contributed to child mortality in Bafut Sub-division.

Strategies such as free vaccination of children less than five years old, provision of treated mosquito nets, antenatal health education, free treatment of malaria for pregnant and under five children, health campaigns and sensitization, availability of first aid boxes in schools, were some of the strategies put in place by the actors mentioned above but bad roads was seen as one of the most hindering factors of the spread of these strategies. Bafut had witnessed a

significant reduction in child mortality rate (from 150 deaths per thousand in 1990 to 25 deaths per thousand in 2018), though did not achieve the MDG 4. Prospects should be made for the achievement of the SDG 3 by 2030.

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## MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICE REGARDING SOCIAL SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN ROMANIA - QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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**Abstract:** *The elderly in Romania benefit from a set of social benefits and a wide range of social services depending on the needs identified by specialists. The main social services for seniors are residential centers, home care services and day centers. The aim of the paper is to present the models of good practice of social services for the elderly in Romania, and the research aims at mapping social services for the senior citizens in Romania and identifying models of good practice in terms of the following analysis indicators: type of service provider; typology of the social service; category of activities carried out; elements of novelty and originality of the analyzed services. The methods used in the research were: analysis of the case study documents, comparative analysis of the mentioned indicators.*

*The results highlighted the implications and role of social services on beneficiaries and communities. The conclusions of the survey reflect the importance of the existence of social services for the elderly perceived as models of good social practice, on the one hand, and on the other hand we highlight the essential role of adapting these services to the needs of elderly beneficiaries.*

**Key words:** elderly person; social service; residential center; day center; home care.

### 1. Introduction

The elderly represent a vulnerable population with special needs, because of the physiological limitations and fragility characteristic of the aging phenomenon and depending on personal situations of a socio-economic, medical and physiological nature; they benefit from social work measures, in addition to social insurance benefits, meant to cover the risks of old age and health (Bodi, 2017: 34). Elderly people face a set of complex challenges and it is imperative that specialists identify and address their particular needs and the problems they face, so that this segment of the population can adapt (Chirugu, Răduț, Andrioni, Popp, 2020). Social services contribute to meeting the needs and increasing the individual capacity to participate in society, guaranteeing respect for human rights (Andrioni, 2018b., Andrioni 2018a.)

Starting from the needs of each senior citizen, social services can have a wider addressability, at the group or community level. Social services are proactive and involve an integrated approach to the needs of the elderly, in relation to the socio-economic situation, health, level of education and social environment of life.

In order to achieve coherent, unitary and efficient social actions for the benefit of the senior, social services can be organized and provided in an integrated system with employment, health, education services, as well as other social services of general interest, as appropriate. (Mureșan, 2012 : 122).

## **2. General contextual framework for providing social services to the elderly**

In order to prevent, limit or eliminate the temporary or permanent effects of situations that may affect the life of the elderly or may generate the risk of social exclusion, the seniors have the right to social services (Jaylor and Francies, 2015). Dependent elderly people benefit from personal care services provided in accordance with the degree of their dependency and their individual needs for assistance, as well as according to their family situation and their income. The local public administration authorities have the obligation to provide personal care services at home or in residential centers for dependent elderly people who live alone or whose family cannot take care of them. The evaluation of the functional autonomy of the dependent persons and the establishment of the degrees of dependence are made on the basis of some standard criteria, approved by a decision of the Government. The provision of care services is made according to the individualized assistance and care plan, developed by specialized personnel, based on the recommendations formulated by the evaluation team. The provision of personal care services at home for the elderly is done by formal or informal caregivers. They benefit from facilities and support services, allowances, counseling services, respite services and care leave, according to Law 17/2000.

In order to keep them in their familiar environment and prevent situations of difficulty and dependence, the elderly benefit from counseling services, accompaniment, as well as services for arranging or adapting the home, depending on the nature and degree of impairment of functional autonomy. The care of dependent elderly people in residential centers can be arranged only if their home care is not possible.

Elderly people with income are required to pay a monthly contribution for the provision of personal care services at home and for assistance and care in residential centers, established by local public administration authorities or private providers who manage them. If the senior citizen has no income or cannot pay the full monthly contribution, the amount related to it or the difference up to the full amount of the contribution is provided by the legal supporters of the elderly person, according to their income level, calculated per member. family, in the amount provided by law. Elderly people who have no income or legal supporters do not owe the monthly contribution, this being ensured from the local budgets, within the limits decided by the local public administration authorities. The elderly person who concludes legal acts translating property, for a fee or free of charge, for the purpose of maintenance and personal care, has the right to protection measures granted under the law.

Sorin M. Rădulescu claims that except for the inequalities between the elderly and the rest of the population, in the distribution of income and in the consumption of goods and services, there are a number of inequalities related to living conditions, access to services, communication isolation, lack of active social work. Beyond the precarious financial situation of the elderly population, they face acute problems, such as abandonment of active social roles, poor health, loneliness, dependence, the feeling that the elderly is generally a "burden" for society (Rădulescu, 1994: 89). In Romania, the contemporary family tends to exclude from its bosom old age, illness, death, to institutionalize them, isolating them in hospitals and homes. Young people ignore that they are also part of life, being "mandatory" existential components. An extremely difficult situation is registered in the homes for the elderly, where there are only modest resources to meet the care needs of this category. Although worldwide the current trend is for institutionalization to be an extreme solution, with true social protection for the elderly to be provided at home, "in Romania, institutionalization remains a necessary solution, as long as internment resolves, within acceptable limits, the need for housing, food security and, in many cases, gives a sense of security to the elderly" (Matei et al, 2019: 6). On the other hand, in the Western world, there are protection systems meant to make sure that institutionalization is a voluntary act, carried out only at the request of the beneficiaries.

In Romania there is a particular situation, namely the requests of a large number of elderly people to be cared for in social work institutions, because personal incomes are insufficient to cover the costs of daily living, on medicines, food and housing expenses. and because they were left alone. Also, the rural environment is a space truly little open to the offer of social services, medical and socio-medical care. The centers for the elderly, the care and assistance centers, the recovery and rehabilitation centers financed from the local budgets are few in number and do not cover the requests, these being much larger than the capacity of these institutions (Nicoară, 2014: 92). Centers for the elderly funded by non-governmental organizations also have few places and the demand for assistance is extremely high, although the maintenance costs in these social work institutions are high. In this situation, the provision of social services requires a complex and integrated approach to ensure the maintenance of the elderly at home, which would substantially relieve their accommodation and care in institutions, where the costs, as mentioned, are much higher. Starting from this presentation, research that revolves around social services in general and those aimed at the elderly in particular must be extended.

### **3. The methodological approach of the research**

The general aim of the paper was to identify and present models of good practice in social services for the elderly in Romania, and the specific objectives of the research were to map social services for the elderly in Romania, on the one hand, and to identify models of good practices in terms of the following analysis indicators: type of service provider; typology of the social service; category of activities carried out; elements of novelty and originality of the analyzed services. The methods used in the research were document analysis, case study, comparative analysis of the aforementioned indicators. The research universe consisted of social services provided by private bodies or public institutions in Romania.

The analysis of documents as the first method used in the preliminary stage of investigation aimed at analyzing the pages and official reports of institutions providing social services in Romania: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Social Work Departments of Brasov, Tulcea, Turda and Iasi, Directorate of Social Work and Public Services Galati, Hârja Complex for the Elderly, Crucea Alb-Galbena Foundation; specific legislative elements: Law 17/2000 and Law 292/2011. Through this method, the following specialized studies were also analyzed with reference to the social services segment: *Development of social services for the elderly in Romania: The contribution of European funds* (Stănculescu and Marin, 2019), *Social services in a contemporary context* (Andrioni, 2018), *Dynamics of social services development*(Andrioni, 2018), *Models of good practice in integrated social care for the elderly* (Măță, 2016). The mentioned studies and the analyzed legislative elements aimed at understanding the real interest of the topic for the real world and the legislative framework in force that regulates the organization, functioning of social services, for the elderly in Romania. Also, the investigation of the level of development of social services at national level, from the official reports allowed the mapping of social services for the elderly.

The second qualitative method used, the comparative analysis, was substantiated on the basis of specific analysis indicators: a) type of service provider; b) typology of the social service; c) category of the activities carried out; d) elements of novelty and originality of the analyzed services, indicators that allowed the comparison of the own data with the data gathered from the targeted research field coming from the analyzed documents. This method was significant in obtaining relevant information about social services, in identifying services considered as models of good practice, and in comparing these models.

The third method used was the case study that combined multiple methods (Yin, 2005), incorporating data obtained through the methods of document analysis and



to transform the institutional environment into an environment that it allows coexistence in conditions of tolerance and mutual acceptance, thus leading to an increase in the quality of life of the beneficiaries. The elderly interned in the home have the opportunity to receive spiritual assistance, right in the center, where a chapel is set up where a parish priest is assigned.

The center has concluded a collaboration contract with the Braşov County Library, and once a week a representative of this institution travels to the center to carry out activities with the beneficiaries, which consist of thematic readings, music auditions at the express request of the beneficiaries. representative photos for the cultural-artistic field from different historical periods. The center provides the beneficiaries with a space where they can receive visits from relatives, friends and / or relatives, which ensures an intimate setting and a pleasant ambiance, being arranged in a hospitable manner, different from the model room.

The center is structured by distinct compartments, provides all the necessary resources and is equipped with elevators that allow easy access for the elderly to all spaces and all services offered, regardless of their functional status. Each compartment is equipped with a living room where leisure activities are carried and a dining room. Also, within the center there is a virtual information office equipped with computers with different operating systems, webcam, microphone and internet access, ensuring all the necessary conditions so that the beneficiaries keep in touch with family members and / or friends who live in other counties or abroad. In order to really reproduce the living conditions in the center, so that any potential beneficiary or owner can have the opportunity to view and form an opinion on how the living space is structured, the model room has been arranged. At the level of the center, there is an Advisory Council made of representatives of the beneficiaries, who participate in the monthly meetings with representatives of the institution's management. During these meetings, the "voice" of the beneficiaries conveys any wish or suggestion that may lead to the Improvement of their subjective well-being. On these occasions, all the suggestions expressed by the elderly are recorded, along with the extent and the term in which the center can concretize them, this approach aiming to actively involve the beneficiaries in the decision-making act at the center level. The personalization of the living rooms, the diversity of services, the professional training of the specialized staff, the complexity of the activities intended for spending free time make the adaptation of the elderly to the institutional environment much easier.

*b. Home for the Elderly "St. Spiridon", Galati County, Galati Department of Social Work and Public Services.* Openness to the community is the model of good practice. Among the cherished projects implemented we may mention the intergenerational exchanges and collaboration with animal welfare associations. The elements of novelty and originality consist in the intergenerational exchange, the avoidance of social and psychological isolation; initiating animal-assisted therapies, maintaining the cost of maintenance at an acceptable level for the elderly and his family. Seniors accommodated in the home are permanently treated as partners in the provision of social service and not as passive actors, as "recipients".

*c. Social-medical center for the care of the elderly - Parish „St. Gheorghe”Hârja, Bacau County.* Spiritual therapy is relevant for all institutionalized elderly people, with chronic / terminal illnesses, people with disabilities because it is the only viable alternative to avoid the trauma of leaving home or children / relatives, giving them maximum autonomy, respect for human dignity, individuality (Mata, 2016: 5). The beneficiaries of the residential complex discover, by participating in the activities of spiritual therapy, a new moral and affective support, either in the relationship with the priest / spiritual counselor, or in the relationship with the divinity or with other colleagues who take part in the same religious service. In

addition, the program offers the possibility of involvement in social recreational activities, within the limits of physical and mental peculiarities, encouraging interpersonal contacts. The service also comes to the support of the family, the relatives by reducing their overload and the correct information regarding the psycho-socio-spiritual recovery techniques.

The livestock farm was inaugurated in 2013, the animal farm is the main supplier of milk, eggs and meat needed for healthy and quality food for the elderly. The vegetable greenhouse started its activity in 2016 in order to provide, in addition to the farm, food and vegetables to be consumed both fresh and canned. As for the bakery / pastry, the building was inaugurated in 2015, being located in the courtyard of the Residential Center and provides bread and pastries recommended by the nutritionist to the elderly, but also for the employees, for a fee. The candle workshop is the main leisure activity for both the elderly and the children's center within the institution, over time the business became known, and now we offer candles for a price as wedding testimonials or as simple decorative objects.

### 5. Analysis of good practice models of elderly home care units - Case studies

Based on the *mapping of social services such as home care for the elderly* through the research methods previously illustrated, Figure no. 2 summarizes the situation of these categories of services in all counties of Romania.

The map of home care units presented in figure 2 shows that of the 265 home care units licensed on 08.03.2021 in Romania, 28% are public and 72% are private, most of them in Sălaj County.

Figure 2: Map of home care units in Romania (number of services)



Source: servicii-sociale.gov.ro, 2021

a. Assistance and care at home for the elderly - Care unit "Harmony", under the coordination of the Tulcea Social Work and Protection Directorate, and the multidisciplinary team that ensures the provision of services, monitoring the evolution of the person receiving services but also monitoring the activity of caring for the elderly consists of 3 inspectors - case managers, 1 psychologist, 13 caregivers for the elderly, volunteers and other specialists employed by DAPS, namely 1 physiotherapist and 3 community nurses. On 20.11.2018, the beneficiaries of the services provided by the "Harmony Care Unit" are 44 senior citizens who, due to loss of functional autonomy caused by physical, mental or mental ailments, need significant help to perform the usual activities of daily living with day. The main services provided by the caregiver of the elderly are personal care services, such as body hygiene, support and / or clothing-undressing, feeding and hydration, support for mobilization, support for travel and communication, housekeeping and household services like food preparation and administration or In the case of elderly people without income, providing two meals through the Municipal Canteen, personalized space sanitation activities, administration of medicines according to the doctor's prescriptions, shopping, support for

moving outside the home and accompanying the elderly person to various social actions dedicated to them (shows, plays) or marking of international days (International Day of the Elderly, March 8<sup>th</sup>), accompaniment or socialization, making payments for services and obligations, recovery and physical and mental rehabilitation services such as psychological counseling, social, physiotherapy services (medical gymnastics, massage). In order to support the care staff and to facilitate a quick and good accommodation of the elderly with the care staff, the team psychologist provides emotional support and supportive counseling to the beneficiaries of the services. In situations where difficulties arise in establishing an appropriate relationship between beneficiary and caregiver, the activity was monitored through regular visits to identify sources of dysfunctions (poor communication, discrepancies between expectations and possibilities, etc.) and their elimination. As a member of the multidisciplinary team, the physiotherapist provides, through specific techniques and methods, prophylactic, therapeutic and recovery kinetic assistance, all actions aimed at improving the health and comfort of the elderly, educating or re-educating some deficiencies. Through social counseling services, the elderly benefit from information, guidance, moral and emotional support, legal advice, support for obtaining social work rights (the case manager for the degree of disability is prepared by the case manager) and also for obtaining financial rights (pension), support for obtaining certain civil status rights documents or identity documents. Social work services are information services, home visits, ensuring links with other services / institutions, needs assessment and elaboration of the service plan, accompanying the elderly in various social situations.

The implemented practice model is promoted and shared with other providers by participating in meetings / reunions / conferences organized locally or nationally, participation in the works organized by the Professional Body of Specialists in Social Services within the Association of Romanian Municipalities.

#### *b. Home Care Unit for the Elderly - DAS Brasov*

The social services offered through the Home Care Unit are carried out at the home of the elderly who are in a situation of social-medical dependence, in order to reduce the number of people requesting specialized assistance in institutions. The services of evaluation, coordination and monitoring of the Home Care activity are offered with the support of a social worker, a psychologist and a nurse, as well as a physiotherapist. The services performed at the beneficiaries' home are specialized Home Caregivers and include basic and instrumental activities according to minimum quality standards for home care services for the elderly and body hygiene; dressing and undressing; disposal hygiene; nourishment and hydration; transfer and mobilization; moving inside; food preparation; shopping; housekeeping activities; accompaniment in means of transport; travel abroad; support for the payment of current services and obligations, etc.

Home care comprises a range of services and facilities provided through measures of prevention and assistance for the dependent people in the community, so that they can increase their degree of independence, and can remain, as much as their health allows, in their own homes, thus making more efficient integration and maintenance of the elderly in the community.

The representatives of the multidisciplinary team within the activities, hold information and counseling sessions on various topics of general interest: health topics aimed at maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, identifying possible risks of injury or worsening of health caused by the environment and / or family, facilities and services provided to the elderly in the community, knowing and combating forms of abuse and neglect, etc.

They provide the coverage of the basic and daily instrumental needs and additional psychological counseling and physiotherapy session.

*c. Services, Care and Home Care Center - Crucea Alb-Galbena (The White/Yellow Cross) Foundation of Romania.*

The beneficiaries of the Center receive integrated home care services, monitored through the telecare system (services dispatched through the call center): medical and social services, recovery, provision of recovery and medical rehabilitation equipment, basic care services, with the help of a complex team of specialists (doctors, nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, home caregivers) and modern means of recovery. Through the registry service of the Center, the persons requesting support are identified in order to overcome certain situations, as the case may be, followed by the socio-medical evaluation at the home of the potential beneficiary of services, according to the legislation in the field. Medical and social needs assessment - consists of a visit to the beneficiary's home, needs assessment, completion of the socio-medical worksheet which includes data on the beneficiary, type of services requested, time and hours that will be provided for care; evaluation that is followed by the elaboration of the Individualized Care Plan - which includes information about the care needs, the degree of dependence of the respective beneficiary, the types of services that correspond to his care needs, the objectives to be achieved in the care process, the team involved providing services to the respective beneficiary. The organization offers to the beneficiaries with pathologies with high vital risk the possibility of communication of the assisted person through the Telecare service through the dispatcher. The Crucea Alb - Galbena Foundation in Romania aims to improve the quality of life of the elderly, by using advanced communication technologies combined with individual, responsible, long-term monitoring by a team of professionals. An additional benefit, which cannot be quantified is the peace of mind of those who know that their parents and grandparents are monitored in emergency situations in the most complete and empathetic way possible by means of the latest communication technologies available on the market. at the superlative, at the professional and human level. This innovative monitoring system, in a country and at a time when the aging process is growing, greatly reduces the costs for the institutionalization of the elderly and for their supervision at home.

**6. Day centers for the elderly from the analytical perspective of good practice models - Case studies**

In consideration of the *mapping of day social services for the elderly* through the research methods previously illustrated in figure no. 3 summarizes the extension of day services to all counties in Romania.

Figure 3: Map of day centers for the elderly in Romania (number of services)



Source: servicii-sociale.gov.ro, 2021

The map of day centers presented in figure 3 shows that out of the 152 day units with license in operation on 08.03.2021 on the Romanian territory, 48% are public and 52% are private, most of them being in located in Bucharest.

*a. Day center for socializing and leisure time spending for the elderly (club) Noua - Brasov county* is directly subordinated to the Brasov Social Work Department. The services offered to the elderly aim at maintaining and improving physical abilities (manual dexterity, exercising), maintaining or improving mental and sensory abilities (training cognitive functions, prevention of depression, cognitive decline and senile dementia), prevention of health deterioration, valorization of the elderly person, promotion of the image of an active aging, valorization of the life experience, of the altruism and availability of the elderly person and the social interaction between generations.

The representatives of the multidisciplinary team, within the activities, hold information and counseling sessions on various topics of general interest: health topics aimed at maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, identifying possible risks of injury or worsening of health caused by the environment and / or family, facilities and services provided to the elderly in the community, knowing and combating forms of abuse and neglect etc.

The elements of novelty and originality consist in the fact that the beneficiaries of the Day Center for socialization and leisure for the elderly (club) of Noua every year since the establishment of the services go on stage in one of the largest performance halls in Brasov , on various occasions (International Day of the Elderly, December 1<sup>st</sup>, Winter Holidays, etc.) to present cultural and artistic performances, in which they hold poetry recitals, folk dances, society dances, plays, etc. The FOOD project came to the aid of the elderly by providing housing facilities in order to optimize their eating style and improve their quality of life by using IT technology. The homes of the elderly people involved in the project were equipped with an electric oven, a hob and a refrigerator. All the pieces of equipment were connected to computer software, accessed via a tablet offered to each beneficiary during the project. The Social Work Department (DAS) Brasov in partnership with Transilvania University of Brasov, the Indesit company, the IT solutions company Vision Systems, as well as research institutions / organizations from 4 other European countries have successfully implemented the FOOD Project - "Smart Kitchen", intended for a number of 30 beneficiaries from 3 European countries, of which 9 beneficiaries of services for the elderly within the DAS. The second project that targets the elderly is the NOAH project, which aims to monitor the elderly in their own home and transmit to formal or informal data about them through an application. Implementation of a senior academy, where they received information from several spheres of activity and interest for the elderly such as methods of preventing fires in homes, providing first aid, methods of preventing aggression and abuse against the elderly in the community, as well as the collaboration with the students of the Faculty of Sociology and Communication, Social Work Section for establishing intergenerational relations.

*b. Vovidenia Day Center for the Elderly from Iași county*, subordinated to the Iasi Social Work Directorate, offers the possibility to the elderly, who are mostly alone, to enjoy the meeting with elderly people, the possibilities to spend their free time in an active way through participation in various activities and actions of the center. The beneficiaries of the center are 50-60 seniors who participate daily in activities. The services offered are psycho-social counseling and information, socialization and leisure, primary medical services / maintenance and recovery.

As novelty elements we may cite the following activities carried out within the center developed at the request of the beneficiaries, namely a number of 7 retirement clubs divided uniformly within the municipality, to multiply its activities in all areas of the city. The clubs are attended by a number of 700 registered beneficiaries and organize shows with the

participation of beneficiaries on various topics twice a year, on the occasion of the International Day of the Elderly and the Winter Holidays, in which the participation and involvement of the beneficiaries is significant.

Within the center, under the guidance of a specialized instructor, recreational therapeutic activities are performed such as gymnastics, aerobic gymnastics, dance therapy, board games, thematic competitions and trips to the monasteries and other touristic sights with special cultural value in the Iasi area and throughout Bucovina. An important partnership was concluded with the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports because dozens of students completed their internships working directly with the beneficiaries in the physiotherapy and massage rooms. The beneficiaries offered emotional support to groups of detainees from the Iasi Maximum Security Penitentiary, who participated in various activities (dance therapy, rummy, free discussions) in the center. The elderly showed compassion by giving them food and books.

*c. Turda Day Center for the Elderly* is subordinated to the Social Work Department Turda, Cluj county and is one of the first centers of its kind in the country. The socio-medical services provided by the Day Center are socialization and leisure, medical and social counseling, psychological counseling, physical therapy. The number of people who want to be among the beneficiaries of the socio-medical services of the Day Center is growing, currently 657 people being enrolled. One of the originality elements is the fact that the Day Center operates together with the Home Care Center for the Elderly. The daily activities within the center consist of socializing, board games, medical, social and psychological counseling as well as medical recovery programs in the room for physiotherapy and massage. In 2012, the Day Center in collaboration with the Turda Tin Association, educational institutions and the Ratiu Theater Workshop began to organize activities with children and young people, that proved to be very well received by both generations. One aspect that confers originality to the activity of the center is the yearly organization (starting with October 1<sup>st</sup>) of the "Senior Month" event. The most successful and interesting activities of the Day Center have become organized parties and trips in the country and abroad. The fact that the staff of the center receives invitations from other day centers or institutions to present cultural programs or to carry out other activities is the very recognition by them that the Turda Day Center for the Elderly is a good practice model.

## **7. The results obtained**

The case studies described above show that social services for the elderly contribute to increasing the quality of life of service recipients. The residential centers for the elderly manage to prevent the aggravation of the dependence of the elderly and maintain them in a permanent acceptance towards the community of the center and provide the possibility of a family reintegration perspective. Assisted people feel at home, free to express their opinions, to have social relationships with acquaintances, to satisfy certain pleasures of their own. They recovered from the point of view of mental balance, living with hope. The implications of social service on its beneficiaries consist in creating a family atmosphere, ensuring and guaranteeing a standard of living that meets the needs of the elderly, socializing the elderly, by engaging in cultural activities, occupational therapy, rediscovering the sense of usefulness by involvement in various activities, respect for privacy and confidentiality in the process of assistance, developing a relationship based on trust and acceptance, obtaining positive results - when medicine does not have sufficient resources to treat the body, to offer to treat the soul, cultivating and harmonizing the beneficiary-employee relationship based on feelings of esteem, empathy, friendship, mutual respect, solicitude, belonging, prevention of the installation and / or aggravation of the dependent state of the elderly person by expanding the spiritual therapy service, reducing the degree of isolation and social exclusion

of the senior citizens in situations of addiction and their reintegration into society, the decrease in the number of people with various chronic / mental illnesses hospitalized by providing psycho-socio-spiritual therapy services. Some of the elderly have the power to find new motivations, to dedicate themselves to activities they have always wanted to accomplish. Those who no longer have the power to do so have the fear of death, the only thing that keeps them alive, or the consideration of death as the only possible relief for them. The effort to find motivations is new to us, the young people, being convinced that life must be part of a goal that gives it meaning and significance. However, most of them elderly people have stopped to look for the meaning of their lives. They simply live, some with the conviction that our purpose is not to ask ourselves what we live for, others with the hope that maybe one day things will change for them.

Through the services provided by the home care units, the beneficiaries can maintain their degree of independence, are able to continue their life at home as long as possible, so that they can benefit from dignified care, adequate and appropriate to individual needs directly in their family environment. Due to this type of care, the costs necessary for specialized care, the number and duration of hospitalized treatments are reduced.

The elderly who benefit from social home care services feel more protected and more important. The attention of the specialized staff is focused only on the beneficiary, building a friendship relationship between the two parties based on respect and understanding. The elderly person keeps his habits, living in his own house, he keeps his feeling of independence. Social relationships are especially important for the health of the elderly, both his friends and family can visit him whenever needed.

In order to promote the beneficiary's independence, to maintain the person's autonomy and to reduce the degree of dependence, the physiotherapist performs movement and physical activities at home.

Among the advantages of home care for seniors we may list the prevention of the elderly institutionalization, especially for low-income people, the decongestion of overcrowded hospital unit full of social cases, due to the fact that sometimes old age is confused with disease, the drop of the number of elderly people who need institutionalization.

The absence of a support network and implicitly of social contacts leads to the degradation of the psychic and sensory capacities, marginalization and social exclusion. Thus, in order to promote active aging, the emphasis is laid on the involvement of the beneficiaries in the activities carried out within the day centers for socialization and leisure for the elderly where they interact with people of the same age but also with the younger generations. Both seniors and young people are involved in organizing events and actions through projects carried out in collaboration with educational institutions.

Among the benefits brought by the activities carried out in the day centers for seniors we may mention the enhancement of beneficiaries' self-esteem, through outfits, external personal appearance, changing mentalities, attitudes, improved communication. We witness the improvement of physical and mental health by developing sports activities, dance therapy and adapted gymnastics, overcoming anxiety through group therapy, awareness of community members for their involvement in support measures for the elderly vulnerable to overcoming difficult situations, overcoming crisis situations such as losing a partner through occupational therapies, member interaction community with the elderly to create an extended family for the vulnerable person. The trips and pilgrimages organized and attended by most of the elderly led to the establishment of friendly relations, which subsequently involved mutual support, spending free time together, overcoming moments of loneliness.

Through the activities carried out, these facilities lead to the increase of the beneficiaries' self-esteem, manifested in outfits, external personal aspect, change of

mentalities and attitudes, improvement of communication. Sports activities, dance therapy, adapted gymnastics and physical therapy have left their mark on the state of physical and mental health of the elderly, and this aspect is highlighted by the medical documents periodically added to the social dossiers.

### 8. Conclusions

Depending on the elderly people's needs and degree of dependency, they are provided with adequate social services. In the context of the accelerated aging of the population at the national and global level, the development of services dedicated to the elderly is especially important. For independent seniors who want to have an active life it is useful to participate in day center activities. Home care and residence in centers is necessary for people who need long-time specialized help and care. For the elderly living alone without assistance, home care becomes vital. Often home caregivers are the only people who still visit the of beneficiaries. The models of good practices identified are landmarks in improving social policies in Romania. Based on the research, it was found that keeping the elderly in the family environment and providing support at home, by offering support through prevention services at the community level has a greater utility because the costs of these services are significantly lower than the costs of living in a residential institution.

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## THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AS TECHNE, EPISTEME AND PRAXIS

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**Abstract:** *Technology is part of the activities we do in our daily lives. It is both the method by which we have come to be able to organize our lives and society and an experience in itself through the worlds and opportunities it opens up for us. Because technology has come to develop so much and be so complex, we can no longer see technology as a tool. It can mimic the human process of learning, thinking and even creation, which requires the technology to be redefined. To bring a new definition of technology, we start from the idea that man has built technology according to his resemblance so that it can do human work. For technology to cross the tool threshold, it needed to mimic human intelligence - which it did, and because of this we define technology by looking at its capacity of being episteme, techne and praxis.*

**Key words:** technology; episteme; techne; praxis; artificial intelligence.

*Technology - from depending on human to something without which human cannot live.*

### 1. Introduction

Technology has been seen throughout history as a tool. This stems from the fact that technology is our creation and we made it to be useful in the activities we do. The development of technology went hand in hand with scientific development. Each discovery was used for the construction or improvement of technology or even more, the discoveries were made starting from the existing technologies and searched how to improve them.

Thousands of years of progress have helped us bring technology to a completely different form, so that today it is difficult for us to distinguish whether a work was done by a robot or a human. However, we still see technology as a simple tool, define it so broadly (Brey, 2010) and talk about it as a way to achieve our goals even though there are multiple reasons to define technology as something more.

With this in mind, we intend to define technology in a different way, in a way that considers the fact that it is no longer useless without man and that man has come to feel useless without technology. Because technology has penetrated deep into our daily lives, and because it has taken over many of our activities and our daily work has become just about using modern technology, technology can no longer be defined as a tool, it has become something capable of sustaining itself and functioning without human involvement. That being said, we still have authors trying to argue that technology is not even techne. Despite these attempts, in this paper we argue that technology is techne, episteme and praxis.

We all recognize that technology is a part of our daily lives (McCarthy and Wright, 2004; Griswold, 1989) and has taken over many of our tasks, which is why the classical technological philosophy has greatly criticized the impact of technology on the human being and the whole society (Brey, 2010; Auzias, 1965). Despite this, the humanity has always embraced technology because it made our lives much easier, and because it has contributed enormously to human well-being and increased the human life expectancy (Carrel, 1935).

One of the admirers of technology was Marx, who valued technology and all its capabilities because he saw in technology the ability to do what was beyond human power. In a way, technology was an extension of man and was seen as a true force of production (McKenzie, 1984). Without technology, society could not have developed, because it is not only a means of doing something but also the most important means of social organization, division of labour, etc.

Considering the technological development and its contribution to the prosperity of our society, we focus on defining technology through the prism of three key concepts used in philosophy to define three of the most intelligent human activities: episteme, techne and praxis.

## 2. Defining episteme

Episteme has a special place in the Aristotle's writings where he made a clear distinction between techne and episteme. Despite the difference, he still often identified techne with episteme. For this reason, to understand what episteme is about, we analyze several definitions of it and its particularities.

In its first hypostases, episteme was defined by Aristotle as scientific and theoretical knowledge that can be demonstrated. In his attempts to explain this concept, Aristotle also introduced the concept of *nous* (intellect, intelligence) with the help of which he tried to explain what episteme is. In one of his writings, he mentioned that intelligence (*nous*) is vital in the first phase of episteme development. This makes us understand that for Aristotle episteme involves thinking and intelligence to produce knowledge that can be demonstrated. This intelligence is absolutely necessary for the episteme's formation.

Another important feature of episteme is the demonstration of conclusions achieved through scientific research. Without demonstration, the theoretical knowledge is considered to be unprovable. Because of this, Aristotle divided episteme into two categories: demonstrable and unprovable. This means that episteme is about intelligence that helps to form knowledge, no matter if it is provable at the moment of discovery or not.

Aristotle's view was generalized in Foucault's writings where he says that episteme is the knowledge of human sciences (Balibar, 2015). Although a little different, these approaches are still similar because the human sciences are about research-formed knowledge, which involves intelligence with both applied and unproven knowledge.

Like Aristotle and Foucault, Plato used episteme in the same sense. However, in his writings, episteme is often used instead of techne and all that because Plato was much more interested in distinguishing the difference between episteme and true opinion than between episteme and techne. Because of his research interests, Plato did not pay much attention to differentiating episteme from techne, and used it in a broad sense (Anton and Preus, 1989). The way Plato applied the concept of episteme was observed also by Griswold (1989) which said that the term was mostly interpreted as both science and method.

Unlike Plato, most authors prefer to give episteme a clear definition. For example, Brockmeier and Olson say that episteme is "the cultural order of ideas and concepts that define at a given moment in history, what knowledge is and how we gain and transmit it" (Brockmeier and Olson, 2009: 6). From this definition we can perceive episteme as human sciences together with techne. We say this by considering that in order for some knowledge to be formed we need to know methods of thinking, analyzing and interpreting information as well as methods of disseminating knowledge. In this context, episteme becomes indeed closely related to techne. Despite this close connection, we prefer to look at episteme as something separate from techne, as theoretical knowledge gained through intelligence.

Episteme emphasizes a state of knowledge or identifies theoretical scientific knowledge demonstrated using specific methods. It generally represents the totality of human knowledge, the totality of our sciences that use distinctive methods to make knowledge fruitful, to disseminate it and to discover new things. In all this process, the intelligence is what makes

the difference between direct knowledge gathered from reality, and the knowledge that passed through a filter of analysis, understanding, comparison and search of meaning and utility. In this sense, episteme represents the knowledge gained from a process of thought. Given that people have always sought to make episteme useful in everyday life, we will further define the concept of *techne*, which is about how to use this theoretical knowledge.

### 3. Defining *techne*

*Techne* is a very old word used by Aristotle, Xenophon, Plato, and others. From the very beginning, *techne* was vaguely defined, which allowed the use of the concept in various discussions to explain different things, not necessarily of a similar nature. As an example, we can take the *techne* definition given by Aristotle that has been interpreted differently by the contemporary authors. Richard (2020) says that Aristotle referred to *techne* itself as episteme because a practical action requires the presence and understanding of theoretical knowledge. Although *techne* is perceived by Aristotle as practical knowledge, which is often found next to episteme as theoretical knowledge, *phronesis* as intelligence, *sophia* as wisdom and *nous* as intellect, he tends to identify *techne* with episteme because *techne* is perceived as something made to produce things which automatically involves theoretical knowledge and practical use of it. We agree that if we define *techne* as productive knowledge it cannot be separated from episteme because of two reasons: something with a practical utility cannot be built without theoretical knowledge and without a projection and thinking of its structure, including its utility and because often a theoretical knowledge is accumulated through the analysis of a real object, or in parallel with the construction of that object which allows its perfection, modification and building of other stuff. Practical objects can never be developed and be good enough if no episteme is involved in their analysis and study for improvement. Because of this close connection between *techne* and episteme, Aristotle tended to identify *techne* with episteme, as he saw productive knowledge as a direct projection of theoretical knowledge.

Like Richard, Sterne (2006) said that for Aristotle, *techne* was practical knowledge oriented towards producing things and reproducing them. But at the same time Sterne said that for Aristotle, *techne* was different from episteme; while episteme is something abstract, formal and scientific, *techne* is practical and it either makes or not a theoretical knowledge real.

Considering the similarities and differences, we would like to complement this perspective by saying that episteme cannot be defined as *techne* because not every theoretical knowledge can be used or demonstrated through practice, and not every practical knowledge involves a theoretical analysis. Nevertheless, we cannot say that *techne* is not episteme. If we see "episteme as theoretical knowledge; *techne* as productive knowledge; and praxis as practical knowledge" (Pender, 1974: 21), then *techne* is episteme, it represents the method and principles of producing something, which is theoretical knowledge.

The gaps in understanding *techne* were later filled by authors like Xenophon or Plato who identified *techne* with the method by which theoretical ideas were demonstrated. Xenophon said that *techne* is about the knowledge that describes how to do things, and Plato said that *techne* describes a way to demonstrate philosophical ideas (Richard, 2020). In this way, we understand that *techne* is the knowledge through which praxis is made or episteme is built. Even more, Plato argued that "techne and episteme must be joined, and they do join when we speak about moral necessity" (Tulley, 2008: 95-96). Even though we are able to understand *techne* and episteme as two separate concepts in the real world, when we talk about knowledge these two must be united. In this way we arrive at a definition of *techne* which tries to clarify the Aristotelian as well as the Platonic approach: *techne* is about doing something by understanding the need of that process of production, as well as about having knowledge and being able to make connections and to understand the process of building.

Therefore, *techne* is a collection of knowledge that describes methods about how to do something theoretically or practically. Meaning we cannot think or build theoretical knowledge

without knowing how it can be done (through writing, thinking, observing, etc.), just as practical actions cannot be done without theoretical knowledge and information about the method that helps to perform that action.

Because *techne* is about knowledge for a process of production, it has often been seen as a major factor that has intervened in social life and brought new social possibilities. Although theoretical knowledge has been vital to the discovery of new ways of doing things and has been inseparable from *techne*, the last one has always been considered an important element in society because it had a major impact on its development and on the main areas for social welfare. All this time *episteme* remained behind *techne*.

In this discussion we must recognize that *techne*, *episteme* and *praxis* (known as practice) are often together and that one cannot exist without the other. To understand better the link between *episteme*, *techne* and *praxis* we will focus further on analyzing the definitions of *praxis* and clarify what it means.

#### 4. Defining praxis

Trying to understand the meaning of the word *praxis* we call in the first place the Cambridge and Merriam-Webster dictionaries. The first says that *praxis* is a process in which a theory or theoretical knowledge is applied in practice, and the second says that *praxis* is something related to practice (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021), an action that describes “the practice of an art, science or skill, or the practical application of a theory” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021).

We notice that both explanations refer to some extent to the application of some theory, knowledge in practice. Contrary to these definitions, *praxis* in Marxism was believed to have nothing to do with theory. Namely, theory is believed to be dependent on practice to prove itself, but practice can start from old ideas that come from the past to be tested in the present. Moreover, if we talk about *episteme* as theoretical and scientific knowledge, then it certainly has an influence on *praxis*, because it can bring ideas and explanations about the real world. To the same extent, *praxis* can serve as a source of theoretical research topics. However, *praxis* is not necessarily conditioned by theory and can take place without its existence. Because of that Smith (2004) said that for Clausewitz *praxis* and theory can be taken as entirely separate things. Contrary to this, Sanchez Vazquez (1997) believed that for Marx, theory was an intrinsic aspect of *praxis* (Marx, 1959, apud Sanchez Vazquez, 1997). In response to this, we will say that Marxism is the one that detached *praxis* entirely from theory and turned it into the synonym of work. Although work is a *praxis* it does not define *praxis*, it is just an example of *praxis*. So, in Marxism *praxis* is nothing more than work or any activity perceived as work.

In a way, this approach is sustained by Aristotle’s definition of *praxis* as an activity itself with no necessary purpose, and which does not equal to leisure (Balaban, 1990), because leisure is the *telos* (end) of *praxis*.

As we can see, because *praxis* has been used in the context of various research, it has been defined quite differently by each author, which is why we do not have a unique definition of this concept. To better understand what *praxis* is about, we have built a table with some of its definitions (see table 1).

**Table 1: Definitions of praxis**

Year	Author	Definition
1832	Clausewitz	“strives to link the means and the ends in real world”
1838	Cieszkowski	“that something that influences with its truth not only the present but also the future”
1933	Marcuse	“the complete realization of human existence as an end in itself”
1959	Marx	“productive <i>praxis</i> or work is conceived as conscious material activity” “has a material, objective aspect”

1966	Hegel	"a categorical phase of the Idea in the movement towards truth" "the thing that sets goals and achieve them by action"
1967	Petrovic	"man is praxis, and he ensures the praxis"
1969	Young Lukacs	"constitutes the revolutionary act which realizes the unity of subject and object"
Books translated in 1961, 1975 and 1999	Aristotle	means action but not necessarily moral and ethical action "an end in itself" the activity itself not the result, it has no end, no limits and no purpose; it is action
1990	Balaban	praxis had more meaning for the Greeks while for our culture poesis as techne is the one that prevails and has more of our attention
2006	Wulf	"a means to mediate the consciousness and the social being, or structure and act" "putting something into practice"

Source: Author's table after Sanchez Vazquez (1997), Balaban (1990), Smith (2004) and Wulf (2006)

Starting from the definitions outlined in table 1 we will say first of all that praxis is action but not any kind of action; it is different from theory and does not always involve the application or testing a theory but certainly it involves the application of some knowledge.

From the above we observe that some authors have said that praxis can be about the exercise of a skill or ability and may describe simple human behavior. This approach is highly criticized by authors like Zuber-Skerritt that saw praxis as an "interdependence between theory and practice, research and development, thought and action" (2001, p.6); or Kemmis and Smith that characterised praxis as "a morally - committed action" (2008, p.6), namely, an activity which involves thinking about the action itself and its implication for the future, including its results. Of a similar opinion were Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles and Lopez-Torres that described praxis as "a dialectical union of reflection and action" (2003, p. 249) and Pullen et all. which identified praxis with "self-reflexive practice" (2017, p. 453). Even if these definitions are quite diferent, the common aspect of these definitions helped us to understand that praxis must be about action that involves the use of some knowledge.

Other authors like Aristotle defined praxis as an action, like the simple human existence. He also defined it by using concepts as poesis and telos. Telos was identified with end, which he believed was of two types: one that describes the end as a goal of action; and the second which sees the end as an actualization (Balaban, 1990). The last one is used the most to describe what praxis is, while the first explains the poesis (a means to reach the end of an action).

In his work Aristotle gave much attention to praxis because it has an immediate realization. In this way praxis becomes a complete action in the sense that at any moment of the performance of the action that moment is complete<sup>1</sup>. This action does not represent necessarily a moral or ethical action, it is just an action complete by its real existence and does not have a specific end, it represents the end itself by performing the activity.

Based on the definitions we have seen, for the interest of this research we will use the next definition: praxis is using the existing knowledge to perform an action.

So far, we have revealed in a clear way the meaning of the concepts episteme, techne and praxis. The first is about theoretical and scientific knowledge. The second is about the knowledge of means and methods of applying a theoretical or practical knowledge, and the last one is about practical action, about movement and performing an activity.

<sup>1</sup> Defining praxis as an action with no purpose, as something complete because its purpose is to perform the action itself, confused many authors which is why some of them saw praxis as poesis. To avoid this confusion, we underline the main differences between poesis and praxis. Poesis is the method that leads to the complete performance of a moment. Praxis is a complete action, it is an end in itself, while poesis is only a means of reaching the end, that is, techne.

In the context of technological revolution, we believe that all concepts have intersected over a single example - technology. Because of that, in the following part of the paper we will focus on proving that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century technology is techne, praxis and episteme.

We start by giving technology a short definition before giving it another meaning.

### **5. Defining technology**

Looking through the definitions of technology we come across a definition which says it is something "that produces technologies, that is, the thinkers of practice" (Auzias, 1965: 6). This definition has put technology between episteme and praxis and transformed it into a tool which serves both episteme and praxis. Even though this is not false, there are and were a lot of situations in which technology served only as a method of performing an action, long before episteme existed as theoretical and scientific knowledge.

From the beginning of the humanity, technology was something very simple - a man-made tool, something meant to facilitate human activity. Of the same opinion was Plato who used the word techne to describe the manual work (Kelly, 2010).

An incipient development of the technology is also described in Rosenberg's (1976) book in which he talks about the beginnings of technology in America of the 19th century. The author told us that the technology of that time must be understood as nothing more than tools made of wood, used by humans to extract natural resources. The evolution of technology was encouraged by the discovery of gunpowder, which occurred much later. So, technology in its infancy was not the technology in the sense it is today and for this reason in the vocabularies of some nations we notice that a clear difference has been made between the simple technology and the modern technology identified with complex constructions. Examples of these nations are the French, Germans, and Slavs, which called the early technology as hand-made technology tools (Solomon, 1984). In their vocabularies, the word technology has been used to illustrate much more complex and complicated tools and constructions than those made by man (hammer, saw, etc.). Despite this difference of perception, in English, the word technology is used both to characterize the early tools and to describe the complex human tools and constructions of today.

From another perspective, Kelly ignored the complexity of technology and defined it as something that we make, something that cease to exist without humans. In his opinion, technology is something that depends on people, being inanimate and built to ease the tasks and the daily life of humans. The author believed that technology is something entirely dependent on man to exist, expand, improve, and adapt to human needs (Kelly, 2010). This idea can be highly argued in the context in which the modern technology is capable of self-sustaining. However, we cannot deny the importance of the human being in creating, building, and improving technology in order to reach the technology we have today.

Starting from the idea that the existence of technology is totally dependent on the human being, Rios Martins and Marcon Del Sano (2008) said that technology is a social construct. This way of seeing technology described it as an invention that has no meaning, purpose or name outside the human brain. If humans will cease to exist technology would remain only as a form of matter and nothing more; all the meanings we give to technology disappear outside the human mind.

While some define technology as something incapable of existing beyond the meanings and significances given by humans, others preferred to define it by considering the technology's usefulness to man. Rios Martins and Marcon Del Sano followed this logic and, after observing the types of technology, they highlighted several meanings of technology: 1) a meaning that describes technology as physical objects such as machines and tools; 2) a meaning that sees technology as a form of knowledge built by the human mind to be able to use, repair, protect and rebuild technology; and 3) a meaning that refers to technology as a set of activities of the human being. The most conveyed significance of technology is that of instrument. This probably comes from the fact that the first technology the humans built were tools to facilitate their work

in matter of survival (for hunting and security). Later, with the formation of societies and the discovery of natural minerals, humans tried to find the easiest ways to extract them. This effort has made an immense contribution to the development of technology as it was now about the development of new extraction tools and the creation of new theories on the practice utility, importance of extraction, other possible extraction methods and so on.

All the before mentioned activities which were for the human survival were called work. Because man's general goal was survival, and his entire work was about that, technology was geared toward making survival easier. Because of that, technology was ultimately transformed into a synonym of work. Probably for this reason Marx embraced so easily the technology because it served the purpose of his ideology.

Returning to the physical significance of technology we believe that no matter if technology is old or new, it still is man-made to make its life and work easier; it is a bunch of tools and machines used in everyday life. This way of explaining what technology means will further help us in our analysis and perception of technology through the prism of philosophical concepts such as *techne*, *praxis* and *episteme*.

### **6. Technology as *techne***

*Techne* never had a very clear definition. By looking into the scientific research, we find out that it was used in different contexts and that each author has chosen to adopt a certain meaning of the word rather than find a single one. In many works we identify the word *techne* along with technology. An example is Tabachnick (2004) who unlike others, perceived *techne* as something different from technology and tried to show the difference between them. To do that, the author emphasizes that although *techne* is sometimes translated as craft, art or knowledge, the meaning of craft must be avoided because it places great emphasis on the final product and not on the knowledge that has been used to produce that something. At the same time, the author urges us to see *techne* as "technical knowledge as something instrumental oriented towards the intentional production of something." The difference between *techne* and technology lies in these senses, namely in *techne* being technical knowledge and technology being the object / technique itself. Broadly speaking, in order to see *techne* as different from technology, we must see *techne* as a thought process (Heidegger, 1993, apud Tabachnick, 2004) and technology as mere tools incapable of thinking. However, the author acknowledges that old technology was about this difference, but contemporary technology is much more as it has less limits (Tabachnik, 2004).

A similar approach was proposed by Kosma and Bouchanan (2017), according to which *techne* was associated with technology because it was identified in ancient texts with craft. However, they argue that *techne* is knowledge rather than experience, it is about thinking and having some knowledge that serves as a method of producing new things or improving the existing ones.

Probably the association of *techne* with craft comes from the fact that often the objects or the instruments were the source of knowledge used to produce new ones. However, many times when it came to *techne*, the nuance of creation was lost. This was also observed by Tulley (2008) who said that in the association of *techne* with technology only the notion of craft was preserved but not the idea of "craft guided by knowledge" (Tulley, 2008: 94). Even more, as long as we identify technology with objects resulting from *episteme*, *techne* and *praxis*, then it has no way of being identified with an art. Although this has been the case for a long time, starting with the 20th century, technology began to make great strides towards change. Today, in the 21st century, the technology is much more than an object or product of industries. We will describe the technology of today to understand why we define technology as *techne*.

Since 1909, technology has been defined as an industrial science. That is, it was made up of knowledge of industrial arts such as metallurgy and others. Technology was not seen at that time as an independent science because it was a science that depended entirely on

knowledge in the physical sciences such as mechanics, chemistry and others (Webster' Second new international dictionary, 1090, apud Tulley, 2008). But in this context, we can ask ourselves if medicine or physics of today can be considered independent sciences while they also depend on other sciences such as chemistry, mechanics, etc.

Therefore, we see that the subtleties of Webster's definition that should have made the difference between technology and the so-called 'true' sciences is rather a subjective point of view. Because all existing sciences have used knowledge from each other to evolve, we cannot consider dependence on one science or another as a criterion for differentiating between the sciences called art and the other sciences made up of different sciences knowledge.

Probably the attempt to see technology as something other than science comes from the old perception of technology as a physical result of the application of knowledge. This can be corrected if we look at technology as something much more complex. Today's technology is no longer about objects that people must handle in order to function, but about technology's ability to function without people and the inability of people to live their daily lives without technology.

The technology we have today was built on the knowledge we have about the human being and about discoveries in other fields. For example, we have the computer that has been built following the model of human brain (networks between neurons and circulation of electrical impulses for information storage or reaction, called neural networks in IT) which functions as the main mechanism for directing technological activity. In order to give computer the opportunity to learn things, different accessories have been attached to it. These had the purpose to allow the computer to collect and store data about the surrounding world. For example, the video cameras (whose construction was inspired by the human eye) and the microphones (to record the sounds and gather information), sensors of different nature (heat, humidity, pressure, etc.). A lot of people are involved in this whole process, just like in the process of learning of any child. Many people contribute to teaching the computer to differentiate and learn new things so that in the end it will be able to recognize and react to the things it was taught about. Even more, due to the huge storage space of information and the ability to respond much faster to impulses, computers have come to do the work of many people, and we assume in the future that it will replace all the work related to memory, fast calculations, and anything not related to creation. For example, many economists have shared their work with computers, the computers do the calculations based on certain algorithms, and the economists are the ones who only enter the data to be calculated.

The processes that take place in the computer are similar to those that take place in the human brain when calculations are made, that is, some existing knowledge in a field (equations) is used to do the math. In this way we see technology using the *techne*. But in another sense, because of the technology's complexity, meaning a big technology made out of smaller technologies, that group of small technologies that use the *techne* has become the *techne* - knowledge about how to do something. The knowledge is stored in this technology, and technology is also the one that uses this knowledge.

For this reason, Rios Martins and Marcon Dal Sasso said that it would be a mistake to say that technology is just a tool and techniques. "We tend to think of technology as shiny tools or gadgets", but technology is more than that, it incorporates all "the machines, methods and engineering processes, theoretical knowledge and knowledge of methods and practices to produce or repair objects or even itself.

In other words, the 21<sup>st</sup> century technology has become an art in the sense that, like other arts and sciences, it has a purpose, namely, to develop more technology to help the human being to understand himself and the world around him and to help men to achieve social well-being. We find technology in medicine, in education, in every field of daily life, and behind this technology there is a lot of knowledge that has been used to build different systems to help us

in everyday life<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, technology is a science about technology. Even if its foundations are laid by mechanics and physics, with the development of technology it has become a science about technology, about technological mechanisms, about the programming of robots, the artificial intelligence, etc.

Considering these things, we say that the 21st century technology is *techne*, it is an art, a science focused on studying technology together with social problems in order to build new technology as methods to solve the human problems. Because *techne* is primarily concerned with building something good<sup>3</sup> to help the human being (Aristotle, 250 B.C., apud Kosma, Bouchanan, 2017), we will also talk about the 21st century technology as *praxis*.

### 7. Technology as praxis

Over time, technology has been defined only as an object, an instrument, an entity, a thing, a good. Therefore, it has most often been associated with *poesis*, meaning a method that helps to complete an action, or with *techne* as a body of knowledge about technology structure and usefulness that could later be used to reproduce or improve it.

However, we believe that the technology of the 21st century has become much more, like something capable of imitating the human thought and therefore to make *praxis* but also to be *praxis*. How is that?

First, we will take as example a computer. It is primarily technology as an object. To understand how technology can be a *praxis* we will look at how this computer works. Let's start with the question: if the computer doesn't work, is it still technology? The answer lies in the definition we give to technology, and as long as we define technology as something workable, as something built with a purpose, as a tool that we can use to achieve our goals, if a computer does not work it is no longer technology but just an object, as a rock. So, for the computer to be technology it must work.

Then, for modern technology to be useful, some mechanical processes must take place inside the object. That is, for our computer to be technology, a mechanical process must take place behind it to help it perform its functions and be useful. This process of fulfilling functions is usually seen as technology. The mechanical process is a group of technologies that allow the computer to be useful as a whole and do many functions.

Because *praxis* is about a process of accessing knowledge, some may say that it is found in the way technology has been built - a construction which allows the interpretation of an input and stimulates the production of an output - the Boolean Logic. But since this logic is about the existence of technology and its basic functionality, we cannot say that it is *praxis*. In the case of Boolean Logic, the technology does not access the information it has because it chooses to do so, but because it was built to do so, it knows to do only that. The logics of its construction can be compared to human hearing or sight. In the structure of the eye or ear there is information about how these organs work, but man does not access it, he just uses the result of that knowledge and does what genetics prescribed. In the case of the computer, Boolean Logic is that genetic information. In this case, the basic functioning processes of technology don't mean *praxis*.

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<sup>2</sup> Here we can give examples of online study platforms, sites where purchases can be made, etc. Today's technology is study-based and represents an amalgam of knowledge that unfolds behind them to function.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle's words about *techne* as something intended to bring something good were debated in classical technological philosophy in which technology was usually attacked for producing tools of mass destruction. Because technology was used in wars it was associated with destruction.

Some critics such as Heidegger saw technology as a bad thing because it invaded everyday life and came to help man in his daily routines. Because of that he believed that technology brought much comfort to humans and turned them into a reserve with useful value (for more see Brey, 2010).

Although the classics considered technology to be bad, we say that technology cannot be bad it is just an art, a collection of knowledge and it is made to produce something to help the humans. Technology is a form of matter, it is not good or bad, these assumptions are just our subjectivity.

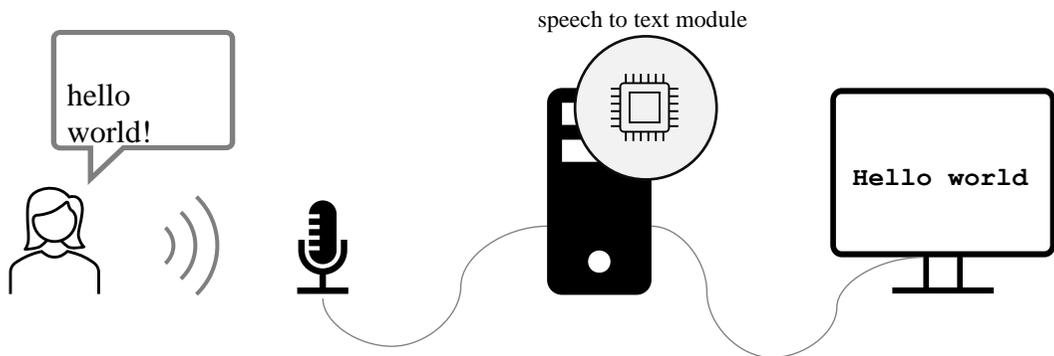
Technology becomes praxis when we talk about accessing and using the information stored in time, the information collected and preserved by the computer itself. That is, the process in which all the technological parts in the composition of technology help the computer to accumulate information that it can later use to respond to certain requests (impulses).

A simple example is the one related to the process of voice recording by the computer, transformation of information into text, the information storage, and later the voice playback of the text. This process involves accessing the stored information to respond to the user's request.

Or if we talk about a robot that has the function of counting trees. It must first have some knowledge in order to be able to identify the trees, it must have in its memory information about what a tree looks like, to be able to compare the image it just captured with the ones it had in order to identify the object with a tree or not. And then the counting process involves accessing information from its memory that allows it to count. In the tree counting action, the computer had to access information about how the trees look and how they are counted, so that they can do their job. This process of using the knowledge it has in order to perform an activity is praxis.

Moreover, this process of accessing information and using it to act is also technology (Boolean Logic implemented in hardware), because modern technology is built from other technology, it is a system made of independent pieces that performs some actions. Thus, we say that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century technology is praxis. To better illustrate how technology can do praxis and be praxis we draw the figure 1.

**Figure 1: Technology as praxis**



Source: Author's figure

In the above figure we have 2 processes:

1. The process of recording which is an action that the microphone does due to the structure and the way it was built (like hearing). The recorder and the recording process are technology.

2. The process of converting speech to text. This process is praxis because the computer performs an action by accessing both preexisting knowledge (a language database) and the data recorded previously. This process is also technology because it is a multitude of calculations at the hardware level. Hence, in this context of modern technology, technology is praxis.

All the actions made by modern technology are praxis because it involves accessing information introduced previously by man so that technology can do exactly what man would have done. But because the technology we have is made of other small technology all the actions that involve the operation of a computer are technology. In this way we came to see technology as both an object and as praxis due to its complex structure.

Although we mentioned above that technology is praxis, we must understand that praxis in technology differs from human praxis; reason why we differentiate between two types

of praxis: 1) human praxis, as a biological process related to the application of knowledge through thinking (seen as the interaction of chemical substances); and 2) technological praxis, as a mechanical process of using the knowledge.

This difference underlines that even though the human being tried to build technology after his looks; technology mimics the thought process but does not mimic the structure of the brain.

Because all this time we've been talking about technology as being able to store data and knowledge, in the next part of the paper we will analyze the relationship between technology and episteme as knowledge which involves intelligence.

### **8. Technology as episteme**

The technology of the past can be described more as objects that were made to ease the human work, but these objects and tools had to be used and handled by man to do the work, they had to be put in the places where they had to dig, they had to be oriented in the direction in which the person would see, and even hold and pushed by humans to be useful.

Today's technology, because it has been taught to perform human tasks and to mimic the human thought process it cannot be compared anymore to objects useless without a man; it has caught up with man and sometimes surpassed him. This happened because over time the sciences we have come to incorporate a large amount of information the humans can never remember by heart. For this reason, man has chosen to develop technology so it could be able to store information and use it even for creation. Here we are talking about artificial intelligence that at first goes through an extensive learning process in order to be capable of doing the complicated tasks of people. These tasks are about using the existing knowledge, gathering new one and using all that to improve the existing things or to create new ones, meaning to replace man in the thought process. The technology we are talking about is able to self-sustain, to access the necessary networks for learning and to create new knowledge based on what it learned.

Because we have built technology to replace the human brain, it has become the episteme itself. That is, the structure of computers responsible for storing information and making connections to create new knowledge is technology - a bunch of technology pieces.

Just as a book is identified with knowledge, so is the technology that currently replaces many book libraries. And because technology is constantly seeking to improve knowledge (e.g. search engines, or translation platforms), they will be episteme in themselves, both a collection of knowledge and that process of improving existing knowledge.

### **9. Conclusions**

Now we believe that theoretical, productive, and practical knowledge are interconnected. Nevertheless, at the very beginnings of the human being this knowledge existed independently, i.e. there was theoretical knowledge of no significance for everyday life, methods without practical use and practical knowledge with no link to any theory or method. These concepts were used when we spoke of people, but even so it was not the case for every man. Aristotle highlighted a big difference between a simple man who builds something without having an idea of the usefulness and how to use the thing he was put to build and a man who builds something because he accumulated some knowledge based on which he decided to build that something.

Man has sought to help himself in this process of creating, thinking, and building new knowledge through thinking, and for this reason he has built the modern technology which has come to compete with humans.

The way modern technology was built and the way it works has come to transform itself into episteme, techne and praxis. Through its structure, it represents a set of knowledge used in a mechanical process of thinking; a process that is both praxis and technology, because mechanical thinking is technology; and in the end, technology is techne, it is the knowledge

about different ways of doing something and through its storage capacity it is the way of accessing knowledge and it is the knowledge itself.

### 10. Future research recommendations

In this research we brought a different perspective on technology, a philosophical view based on a comparison of technology with the human being.

This research can be developed in the direction of analyzing the psychological impact of the new technology on the human being, as well as the way technology is seen in contemporary society - not as a competitor to man but as an extension of man meant to help him in creation and evolution.

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## **“THE CITY BENEATH THE MOUNTAINS” – IMAGES, PERCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS. A SAMPLE OF URBAN SOCIOLOGY<sup>1</sup>.**

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**Abstract:** *The hereby article promotes the results of a field research conducted as part of the doctoral studies under the aegis of the University of Bucharest. Through the case study conducted on the community of Novaci in Gorj, from Oltenia beneath the mountains, we advanced for the first time the innovative concepts of social and symbolic infrastructure.*

**Key words:** rural sociology; social and symbolic infrastructure; Romanian sociology; neointerpretative methodology.

### **1. Prologue or why should a distinct category exist?**

*What is the city but the people?*  
(William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*)

Between July-August 2010, a team from the Faculty of Sociology<sup>2</sup> (University of Bucharest) traveled to Novaci, a town located in Gorj district, in order to conduct a field research oriented on the *social molding of the economic crisis*. However, in the attempt of constructing a sketch of the social problems encountered in the studied area, the research team confronted with an unexpected *paradox*: the anticipated urban environment proved to be one of an *atypical substance*, constituted of elements that belong par excellence to a rural community (justification of actions, life philosophy, type of collective mentality, social relations etc.). The subject of this research project identifies its *starting point* precisely in this *confusion caused by the subjective realities*. The present paper reclaims itself from the urban sociology domain and is being carried into effect with the help of methods and techniques both from visual studies and sociology of representations. The study's *primary objective* consists of the identification, as far as possible, of a *new city typology* – “*the city beneath the mountains*”. In the same manner, we bring into discussion and argue the fact that Novaci is the result of three major historical layers: the *traditional*, the *communist*, and the *post-Revolution* one, “unfinished” stages that combined and produced the today community.

Traian Herseni remarked the conditionality between the *social unit and the historical frame* (2007), and Novaci appears to be an illustrative example if we take into account the documented events<sup>3</sup> from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Regarding the locality's historical background, in 1968, by the agglutination of 7 localities, the Novaci commune was forced to convert into an urban area in order to increase the national urbanization level. However, the

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<sup>1</sup> The article is part of the doctoral research which was completed in 2013: “Infrastructure and society. Theoretical considerations and case studies”

<sup>2</sup> Team of students and PhD candidates coordinated by prof. univ. dr. Radu Baltasiu (University of Bucharest).

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with key-persons of the place in discussion regarding the local and social, in addition to the ones already written in social documents and monographies received from the City Hall and parishes (in Romanian “obști”).

*institutional transformation* did not bring forth the success of a *cultural product* by the name of *city* and this from a simple motive: the adaptability level of a (traditional) community relates to the *historical scale* and not to one belonging to an ephemeral regime (Bernea, 2005). After the communist period in which the community was facing *new challenges and powerful structural deployments*<sup>4</sup>, currently, Novaci has a population of “34 thousand souls”<sup>5</sup>, from which approximately 6 thousand are located in the main settlement.

*The researcher finds it difficult to label the settlement as a city*, mainly because the Novaci community continues to emanate a self-force next to an economical autonomy desire, to build and look after the stabile social relationships *with intensity* (Durkheim, “dynamic density” concept), to possess the culture of “friendliness and familiarity” which, in the great cities, is exchanged with mistrust, social intimacy and materialism (Michael Young and Peter Willmott apud LeGates, 1997, p. 208). The Mayor that administered the community for two consecutive terms, a well-known Mathematics teacher and local leader, formulated the basic idea of the research: “*in terms of utility, Novaci is a city. But in terms of mentality, he remained a larger village*”. The fact that, formally, the locality has the city status is objectively proven by the *infrastructure and institutions* present (hospital and regional police station, ambulance station, firefighters, 3 schools and a high school, water systems, bank branches, ATMs etc.). However, the researcher finds himself in front of a matter that is related to *the subjective reference* upon the lieu, the overwhelming majority of respondents referring to Novaci as to a *village* – both from the general aspect, and the type of the inter-human relations’ perspective. For the reasons stated above, the need for an *urban sociology applied to localities with particular processes*, in our case the *cities beneath the mountains*, emerges.

## 2. Methodological aspects

The city of Novaci comes into sight under the form of a *starting point*, a *sample-city* for a long-term research that will encompass an excursion in a series of ten urban centers with similar characteristics to the ones discovered in the Gorjan community. Thus, the *main objective* is located in the identification and validation of a *particular urban typology* in the Romanian reality design. The exemplification and verification in the field of the hypotheses will be followed up in a series of national locations, further established *after the empirical and theoretical definition of the category* in question.

For reasons associated with time, finances and human resources, *the methodology used will be the neointerpretative one* that has a) powerful roots in the Sociological School of Bucharest’s monographic type of study<sup>6</sup>, b) a starting point in the *Weberian premises*, c) and influences from the *noological sociology*<sup>7</sup>. The goal of the neointerpretative approach is “the punctual identification of those elements that define the potential of survival and reconstruction of the rural world by the use of data ‘extraction’ techniques, rather than the ‘uncovering’ ones specific to the monographic methodology” (Baltasiu et al, a2009: 127). Furthermore, “its finality is the extraction of the local specificity without losing sight of the associated context, defined by the social actor himself” (idem, 137). As well, in order to determine the relational deficit we turned to the *Goffmanian paradigm* of reality as a *role play*, where the social relationship is the *masks’ stage*. Our *hypothesis* was that, as the degenerative

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<sup>4</sup> The disintegration of the industrial economy, the development of the near-by major cities on the expense of the little communities (by draining the material resources and the most valuable demographic), the pressure exercised on the local community in order to ‘urbanize’ the daily conducts (‘urbanization’ that continued, in other forms, after 1989) are just some of the *processes with a destabilizing role* in the recent history of Novaci.

<sup>5</sup> Source: the police captain.

<sup>6</sup> This is through the belief that the reality is of an extremely delicate complexity described under the form of the “parallelism law”.

<sup>7</sup> In which the experience is viewed in relation to the symbolical coordinates.

processes advanced over the community, the peasant communitarian order retired in front of a cvasi-urban Goffmanian reality.

The cadres, local manifestations<sup>8</sup> of interest and the associated actors are: *the political manifestations – city hall* (mayor, adviser, vice-mayor, former mayors and advisers) and the *establishments of political parties* (representatives of the local structures); *juridical manifestations – courthouse, police* (policemen and the head of the local police), *law firm* (lawyer), *notary*; *spiritual manifestations – school and high school* (elementary teacher, teacher (history, Romanian language) and school principal), *church* (priest, vicar, prior), *local paper* (journalist, newspaper executive), *other places* ('the village elder', self-taught characters, young people with a good financial situation, local personalities, formal leaders of parishes, forest guardian etc.); *biological manifestations – hospital* (doctors and hospital manager, midwife); *economical manifestations – market and the Sunday fair* (merchants, buyers), *milk factory* (owner), *international transport business* (owner, driver), *the Parâng hotel* (owner, receptionist), *inn* (bartender, 'most loyal customer'), *sheepfold* (shepherd). The chosen persons are both relevant authorities for the community recognized as such and Goffman's "non-persons" (2003). Further on, our approach will seek to identify the two stages that combined determine the local social realities: a) *the objective layer* and b) the one of *subjectivities*.

From an objective perspective, the interpretation of the *quantitative data* was followed by collecting them from the local authorities or other institutions significant for the researched area. Accordingly, a table was filled out according to the local coordinates (general, demographical, economical, urbanity, security or utility data etc.). We tried to utilize the quantitative data *in the context* from which it was collected, thus trying to avoid what Agar called "over-simplification" – the reality's reduction to its simple statistical and demographical matrix, depending on variables such as gender, age, education etc. (Agar, 198: 121).

Another highly reliable instrument that can provide objective data (Elizabeth Edwards apud Ruby, 1996: 1345) is the *sociological photography*. It does *not create* the image, but it *translates* it from reality to a visual space, having the capacity *not only to illustrate but to demonstrate as well* (Chelcea, 2004: 411). The main critique brought to such an instrument refers to the inherent limitation of the reality to the lens' power of coverage (Elizabeth Edwards apud Ruby, 1996: 1345). Thus, we tried to eliminate this problem by surprising *synaesthesias and contrasts, contexts and details, portraits or activities' developments*, facts that led to the *creation of new hypotheses* and to a clarification of the local realities. The third instrument, of a technical nature, is the *agenda* filled out with contacts data and planning of teams' activities that "must be made ... for every kind of problem ... [for] the most relevant informants known by the village" (Gusti, 1968: 447). "*The contact individuals*" (Baltasiu et al, a2009: 117) or "*the key-informants*" (Agar, 1980: 89) are those persons that assure the researcher's credibility and entrance into the community. The used entrance technique in the social networks is the *personal recommendation*. A final method utilized consists of the *social documents' study* (obtained from perishes, monographies from the inter-war timeframe, documents with relevant regional and national historical content, biographies of the most significant local personalities etc.). The documentary sources posses the *power to retrace the social life* (Chelcea, 2004: 496) and their analysis has as main objective the observation of the way in which *the old forms of social life maintain in the present, reflect in the contemporary typology, and condition the present-time social forms* (Herseni, 2007: 335) – in other words, a determination of the *village's social evolution*.

From the subjective point of view, we kept trace of the social actor's *ways to adjust* to the place, community, locals or strangers; the *attitude types* associated with the local personalities and authorities; *the perceptions* over the objective reality regarding the social actuality; the predominant type of *mentality*; and, in the end, the *effects* generated by this entire constellation

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<sup>8</sup> Concepts of the Gustian paradigm.

of representations, perceptions, mental maps, symbols and images assumed by the individuals. In other words, we “seek for their ideas, feeling and aspirations, that is to say all the contents of their spiritual life and their orientations towards the physical surroundings and, in genre, towards the world” (Gusti, 1968: 428). Thus, we shall use once again the *sociological photography* as a main tool of documentation of the *in situ* social realities (Wright, 1999; 38), by highlighting its capacity to underline the significant detail *just as it is* (Baltasiu, 2009; 1; Pink, 2007: 12). Another instrument called upon in the neointerpretative approach is the *informal interview* or the *semi-structured one*. All the interviews were recorded and at the end of the field research they became the primary data for the *transcripts’ content analysis* and its integration in the final report.

Gusti asserted in his *Works* first volume that in “sociology we are able to know the reality through participation, living, (personal) experience, objective intuition. ... The one that observes that the rural (peasant) life from outside understands it less than the one that participates in it, living a certain period of time in the village, together with the peasants” (Gusti, 1968: 443). The same duality between “going native” through participation and keeping the distance from the studied social fact is observed also by the anthropologist Agar, that suggests a conjunction between the two types of approaches (Agar, 1980: 51, 114). Thus, another method utilized in the Novaci-type of research is the *participative observation* that, next to the *field notes* (Agar, 1980: 111), complete with all the collected necessary information *the journal of the research* and *the preliminary reports*, a fact that led to a data ordination and identification of the study direction (idem, 113). Another method that tries to unveil the perceived symbolistic of the space, time and activities is *the subjective cartography of the local symbolic infrastructure*. For this type of situation, we asked the informants to draw on a piece of paper the Novaci town as they perceive it (physically, symbolically, architecturally, institutionally etc.).

### 3. Conceptual clarifications

In theory, there are two major forms of social aggregation, each with its own structures: *the village* and *the city*. *The village* represents a community based on a territory, grounded on family ties and in possession of a symbolic centre directly linked to faith (the so-called dwelling<sup>9</sup>), cosmic calendar and ancestors (Baltasiu, 2007: 386). *The city* is “defined as a population centre, more developed from an economic, socio-cultural and urbanity-household perspective” (Abraham, 1991: 125), structured on a network of interests and solidarities activated through the functional division of labor (Durkheim). This is a “relatively wide space, permanently populated by socially heterogeneous individuals” (Louis Wirth apud LeGates, 1997: 190) that are concentrated on professions in relation to their competencies (Max Weber).

Each of the two social areas presents an *inherent typology* in terms of social solidarity (Tönnies) and, simultaneously, a different way of referral to the world. Therefore, each instance of the human sociability determines the appearance of a specific type of individual, also defined by opposition: the *communitarian man* and *the social man*. The *social man* is permanently subjected to rigor and conventions, oriented by his own satisfaction of interests inside a system based on the social contract (Louis Wirth apud LeGates, 1997: 189-194). He is a member of a series of social groups (and segmented roles) maintained at a systemic level but with which he cannot fully self-identify (idem: 192), a fact that leads to the increase of the individual’s alienation. On the other hand, *the communitarian man* is considered to be the depository of traditions, customs, and fundamental meanings of time and space (Bernea, 2005: 23) that, ultimately, act as vectors for the community. The postmodern sociology contributed to the crayoning of such distinctions, in the sense that it reduced the distance between them. For instance, Granovetter, in 1973, demonstrated that *the urban space is placed on a network of personal relationships*, the so called “weak ties”. This type of social relations appears to be

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<sup>9</sup> In Romanian ‘vatra satului’.

qualitatively reduced, performing a functional role (the creation of connections and the conservation of the social harmony) of the individual's insertion in the social network by certain social segments of interest (based on the so-called "bridges") offered by the circle of relationships (Flanagan, 1993: 22) with a high intensity of the social contract. The network of weak interdependences in which the urban individual is located lies in contrast to the "strong ties", strengthened from inside of certain communitarian structures, populated by the *communitarian man*.

While the city is a conglomerate structured around an imposing *institutional centre*, based on the functionalist principle of social insertion of individuals by profession, the village is a community that is orbiting around a *symbolic nucleus* territorially, culturally and religiously defined. Both the physical and symbolic centre of the village is the dwelling: "from a territorial point of view, the village is a complex formed of the dwelling, the built terrain and estate, the productive land around it. In turn, the dwelling is shared by the living ones, and the village itself, with the dead ones, and the cemetery" (Ion Ghinoiu apud Baltasiu, 2007: 387). Thus, each type of human association generates a certain type of sociality: *social order* (city) and *peasant (rural) order* (village). The social order is based on the *paradox of society*, concept enounced by Tönnies, while the *peasant (rural) order*<sup>10</sup> is closely linked to Mircea Eliade's concept of *cosmic Christianity*<sup>11</sup>.

#### 4. Hypotheses and a short theoretical corpus

*The first hypothesis* is that the *social relations and the vicinity reports followed an expansion, without necessarily losing intensity, started with the locality's development and its status transition from village to city*. Such an affirmation will be probed once the networks of social contacts will be known and the Sunday fair phenomenon, activity with a regional character, will be studied.

##### 4.1 Gusti and the operationalized cultural dimensions

In order to understand the general configuration of Novaci, we chose the Gustian cartographic method regarding the social relationships in the grid of the identified cultural types: *work, health, spirit, and mind culture*<sup>12</sup>. He claimed in his *Pedagogical Writings* (1973) that *the cultural processes are never in a definite state, but creations and "permanent becomings"*. In other words, the types of cultural activities represent, actually, specific life forms that contribute to the community's formation and solidarity's consolidation.

The work culture refers to the spread of knowledge and experience exchanges regarding the agricultural activities, the work in their own household, the construction activities, the farming, the infrastructure development etc. *The main issue* is identified in the *lack of employments* for the inhabitants of Novaci. It is still practiced, at a large scale, the subsistent agriculture, and the entrepreneurial initiatives are minimal at a local level. *A secondary problem* lies in the relationship between locals and the banks that do not seem to trigger the local development due to the lack of lending systems (adapted to the local productive cycle) and of encouragement programs of local abilities. Thus, *work is no longer the engine of the economical life*.

A community's health culture does not represent anything apart of its *vitality*, next to its *strength* to conserve itself and develop inside its own logic, following similar coordinates. It

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<sup>10</sup> Family, work and social relations are the ones that order the community both socially and economically (see Bernea, pp.25-26).

<sup>11</sup> The spiritual order of space (symbols, holidays, rituals etc.), the existence of the cyclical and long-term time etc.

<sup>12</sup> The names are taken from the studies of the Sociological School of Bucharest - see Lucia Apolzan - "Villages, cities and regions researched by the Romanian Social Institute - 1925-1945", with a preface by D. Gusti, Bucharest, ISR 1945.

can cross sectors like the demographic growth or the typology of frequent diseases. Its indicators are: a) the demographic growth; b) illness typology; c) abortion and contraceptive methods; d) individual-doctor relationship/pharmacy (interest or benevolence?); e) hygiene activities; f) physical culture. *The main problem identified* in this locality is the poor hygiene and unhealthy diets maintained by the lack of educational programs for the local community (environment, health, habitation), the latter being caused by the social indifference of legal authorities and institutions (hospital, city hall, ministry). A *secondary issue* is the drastic drawback of the number of doctors in the Novaci hospital, a central institution with regional reaching.

The culture of the mind and spirit is determined by individuals' manifestations in relation with elements such as tradition, place, belief or social connections. Operationalized, it can be extended on the following coordinates: a) the type of traditional culture (1. life philosophy; 2. the major pillars of the communitarian world: belief, family, work); b) the respect for authority (priest, doctor, teacher, mayor); c) the quality of leisure time; d) the school education; e) activities and places of culturalization; f) architecture and habitation. *The main problem identified* is the cultural inactivity of the population (determined by the lack of interest from the people with decision-making power – president of the House of Culture, mayor, and teachers) and the lack of social spaces of cultural value. A *secondary issue* is represented by the decline of respect for political leaders, doctors, teachers, all with the exception of those individuals considered 'local treasures' actively involved in the community's affairs. A *problem that will escalate in the future* is linked to the architectural style and its quality collapse in the area in discussion (massive and powerfully colored constructions, built without regard to the local architectural symbolism).

#### 4.2. Hypotheses and typologies – the city beneath the mountains

*The tension between city and community* continues to be a central topic in the urban sociology studies (Flanagan, 1993: 13). Abraham noted that "an important dimension of the urbanization process in Romania is the *urbanization of the rural area*" achieved by the rural-urban migration (Abraham, 1991: 240). This leads to the "formation and development of a *new social space*, which takes place ... through a more intense interaction between the two areas" (ibidem).

*The identifiable elements* that can prove the existence in Novaci of a rural (peasant) substratum in parallel to the urbanization tendencies are: the family relationships<sup>13</sup> as a source of social solidarity, the idea of work in households<sup>14</sup> as a logic and fundamental unity of family, the reference to divinity<sup>15</sup>, time and space (conceptions, attitudes, techniques, practices – see Bernea), the coagulation degree of the communitarian social relationships<sup>16</sup>, the means of survival and reference towards them in terms of the *Being*<sup>17</sup>, reporting to the hardships of life philosophy, etc. *According to our secondary hypothesis, the transition process was not*

<sup>13</sup> The family, work and social relationships are the ones that give sense to the community both socially and economically (Bernea, 2006: 25-26).

<sup>14</sup> "'Household', thus, as a family's work unit, constitutes the nucleus of the village's social cell – p.34: the family" (Vulcănescu, 1997: 33).

<sup>15</sup> "Religion appears in our village's life as an expression of human's needs in finding a path of peace and stability in his worldly existence" (idem: 58), in such a way that religion, next to other of his expressions (family and work), arrange the social and spiritual life of any individual. In the peasant philosophy, "the man is sent from God and must work (fallen as he is) in His way" (idem: 57).

<sup>16</sup> "Almost never the man isolates himself from the others and when he does it he is considered 'crazy' or 'rogue' by his peers" (idem: 32).

<sup>17</sup> The synthesis of the peasant philosophy: orderliness (in Romanian 'rânduială'), sense (in Romanian "rost"), natural (in Romanian 'firească'), totality (in Romanian 'întreg'), all next to God's will. "World's great orderliness redounds entirely, like the sun in the dewdrop, in the smallest things and deeds of the human inside the Romanian village" (idem: 25).

*finalized* due to the fact that the imposed modifications were not interiorized by the community in question which succeeded in changing merely part of its “internal data”. In other words, the community is confronted with a *partial loss of its peasant substance* after the transition from a rural community to a peri-urban one by changing some of community’s resistance pillars.

#### 4.3. Urbanism – way of methodological approach

One of the most well-known methods of studying the city is the one proposed by Wirth which clearly distinguishes between the city and the urbanization process. The latter refers to *the extension of urban residential character* and takes place on three levels: *the socio-demographic aspects of the urban expansion; the economy of the urban extension; and the spatiality of the city*. Further, Wirth determines *three key variables – population size, density of settlement and the degree of heterogeneity* (Louis Wirth apud LeGates, 1997: 194) – through which can lead to a *typology of urban areas*. Thus, a first characteristic of the city beneath the mountains can be *its dimension no larger than 20 thousand inhabitants*, figure that will subsequently be statistically proven. A second feature is the *density of an increased social dynamic*, and a third is the *low social mobility*. Wirth’s suggestion regarding the urban lifestyle approach implies three perspectives (idem: 194): (1). a set of *attitudes, ideas* and a constellation of *personalities* engaged in typical forms of collective behavior (2). a *system of social networking* that implies a typical social structure, a series of social institutions and a pattern of social relationships; (3). a *physical structure* (base population, technology and environmental policy). Consequently, we segment the research’s results and the social problems into: (1). perceptions and images; (2). social relationships and vicinity; (3). urban aspects.

#### 4.4. Perceptions: “the city beneath the mountains”

In 1981, Burton Pike – a representative figure in the Urban Sociology School of Chicago, published in his study *The City as Image* one of the city’s densest definitions: *a social image* (Burton Pike apud LeGates, 1997: 246), comprised of the totality of visions, perspectives and perceptions of each relevant social actor. At the level of perceptions, we will operate with three situations: a) “the world viewed from Bucharest”; b) the world viewed by the elites; c) the world viewed by the locals.

“The world viewed from Bucharest”. The perceptions that correspond to this first level encompass *the order, the landmarks and the cultural pattern* of the researcher. Simultaneously, they coincide with the order of the *national authority* that establishes the policies implemented in the territory. When we refer to the city *category*, instantly, we tend to address to a *mental identification of the concept*. Oftentimes, a city’s definition is offered in terms of a *human conglomerate*, spread over a wider territory, with a considerable number of individuals involved in secondary relationships. In such a case when the researcher is seeking access to the social reality of Novaci, he gets off with a *toolkit wrongly applied on the city’s conventional definition*. Thus, when realizing the incipient issue, the researcher is forced to change all his methodology and theoretical corpus of comprehension right on the spot.

The world viewed by the elites. The elites represent a social segment that benefits from a certain strategic placement (Flanagan, 1993: 98), has access to the levers of decision and to the decisions regarding the administering of the material and symbolical resources of a community. In 1987, Logan and Molotch showed that, when elites form a coalition, they transform into a “growth machine” directly linked to the economical profitability zone (ibidem). This appears to validate as well in the case of power and interest networks by joining the *kinship elements* with the *work responsibilities*. In Novaci, the world viewed by the *intellectuals* consists of two manifestation layers: one of the *local intellectuals* (that refer to the community as to a totality with a symbolic value) and the one of the *outside-intellectuals*<sup>18</sup> (that tend to manifest a

<sup>18</sup> An intellectual that was not born or raised in the locality.

highly critical attitude towards the inhabitants). If in the latter category the individuals – as exceptions – achieve results *in the benefit of the community* they became considered *locals by means of involvement*, a phenomenon filtered by the mechanism popularly entitled “village gossip” (in Romanian “*gura satului*”)<sup>19</sup> or utilized by Goffman under the name of *performing distortion* (Goffman, 2003: 83).

The world viewed by the locals. The layer in question is directly linked to the social order and the local socio-economical and cultural realities. This includes discussions on collective mentality, social development pattern, and cultural continuity – the symbolic coordinates of the local reality. What is interesting is that not only the community's personalities are the depository for the identity tendency, but also *common individuals still engaged in a spiritual and traditional social structure*. Michael Young and Peter Willmott in their studies approached the concept of *duration of living residential togetherness* and observed that in the places where there can be identified a long history of social contact and a “solid matrix of friendship”, people refer to one another in terms of *character or physical traits*, the material ones being left on the last position in the hierarchy of frequency and importance of the referral itself (M. Young and P. Willmott apud LeGates, 1997: 215). The same thing can be observed in Novaci. *The businessmen* initially point out man's *personal traits* and then refer to his *ability and capacity* to start or develop a business. *The ordinary individuals* refer in a personalized way to the Other as long as the respective individual has no link to the power-making decisions – there are 2-3 exceptions illustrated by former political leaders (the mayor from the communist regime, the mayor between 2000-2008) seen as men of great character because *they permanently took into account the community* and not themselves. Another interesting referral is the one regarding the villa owners that built in opposition with the traditional architectural style: although the locals do not approve the changes occurred, they do not reproach them, but *kindly* refer to as ‘lost’ individuals. *The politicians* relate to the Other as to a “distressful and jobless individual that owns a cow and a tomato in the backyard” (vice-mayor). In other words, unlike the categories mentioned above, the politicians primarily refer to the *locals from a material standpoint*.

Lynch argues that people structure their perception of the city on two coordinates: “*paths*”<sup>20</sup> and “*edges*”<sup>21</sup>. In the case of Novaci, *the paths* that connect the local community both economically and symbolically are the *streets*, mainly the *thoroughfare*. Another significant example is the road to Râncea resort, a locality 18 km away that possesses tremendous touristic potential, motive of which Râncea is linked to the local hopes of development. Concerning the *symbolic edges* that separate the local realities, they can be: *from the past* (re-acknowledged as significant in the present) and the *present ones*. *The historical channel* is the Gilort River, the one

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<sup>19</sup> Dimitrie Gusti noted that the “village’s public opinion is a psycho-social phenomenon of great interest for science because through it the tradition is being kept or abandoned and the conformism and customs are being imposed or replaced with fashion and innovation. The village gossip that, of course, has also an inferior and vulgar form of plain gossip and intrigue, fulfils a superior function by the selection and propagation of values. If it were not for the village gossip, a lot of customs with sense would have been deserted and a lot of extravagances brought by the will of the wind would have been adopted. If it were not for the village gossip, many of the fundamental institutions of social life such as morality, decency, mutual help would have been destroyed” (Gusti, 1968: 429-430).

<sup>20</sup> The paths where there the circulation fluxes can be identified – both physical and symbolic create bridges between elements or different structures of the same community – “Paths are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. They may be streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads” (Kevin Lynch apud LeGates, 1997: 99).

<sup>21</sup> The edges that differentiate the urban segments are those “linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity: shores, railroad cuts, edges of development, walls. They are lateral references rather than coordinate axes” (Kevin Lynch apud LeGates, 1997: 99).

that once socially separated two *districts* (Romanian-Novaci<sup>22</sup> and Foreign-Novaci<sup>23</sup> populated with migrants from over the mountains). Although for the time being the separation is no longer a consistent one, the researcher often received, without asking, details regarding the provenience of the interlocutor's family. In other words, *the local identity reference exists but as a 'way of connecting' and not separating people*. Moreover, in the daily paths drawn by the interlocutors (mostly intellectuals and politicians), in a high proportion, the Gilort River appears as a *reference point* in the collective mentality. In present, the main observable traffic takes place, as shown above, on the thoroughfare. Beyond this road which is typical for any small town that goes through the central area where the main institutions and the market are localized, the circulation and traffic are extremely low, in the contrary, specific to villages. In other words, *the thoroughfare separates the "Novaci-village" from the "Novaci-city"* and where the local realities are, many times, if not opposed, at least distinct.

Another concept forwarded by Lynch is the "*nodes*". They represent those points with strategic value to the community, with an increased dynamic density that oftentimes has a strong symbolic value. These can be points of interest, of destination, concentrations of local energies, an intersection of paths in which this intensity of the social contacts was observed as extremely high. In Novaci's case, one of these nodal places is the *daily market*, but especially the *Sunday fair* established in the same area, a phenomenon for the entire regional area of the northern Gorj district. If we considered above (with reservations) the two sides of the river as two separate districts, we state with certainty that the market is a central phenomenon in the development of both districts. In terms of *symbolic infrastructure*, Rânca can be regarded as a *node* inside the social logic of Novaci, for reasons such as: all citizens (ordinary people or engaged in local decision-making structures) refer to the Rânca resort *on their own initiative*. Here, things are a bit complicated because of the *different frame of reference*:

- *For the local authorities*, the resort is a *means of political legitimacy* and a *constant reference point*, but a *non-introverted* one. Thus, Rânca is seen as the "*rescue and solution of the Novac community*", both economically and socio-demographically;
- *For the businessmen*, the disproportionate buildings phenomenon with flashy colors and stylistically or functionally incoherency (even irrationally located) reached its peak of development precisely in Rânca resort. *The hypothesis* is that this type of *limited vision* was and still is determined by the immediate desire to make money, without taking into account specific attributes of an entrepreneurial behavior.
- *For the common people*, the situation is completely different, them having only words of praise and smiles to share. However, in practice, *the Novacs were referring not to an approval of the chaotic architectural implementation in the resort, but to aspects entirely distinct: the contact with nature* (the locals were taking pride in the Rânca - Păpușa area, saying that it was much more "prideful" (in Romanian "mândră") than Transfăgărășan) and *the emotional referral*. For local people aged over 40 years, Rânca has an *identity value* by inserting *personal meanings*, emotional even (on subjects of the youthful days of the past, with round dances (in Romanian "hore") on top of the mountains, the sheepfold seating (in Romanian "șezutul la stână") and the shepherd songs (in Romanian "cântece oierești" etc.).

#### 4.5. The social relationships and vicinity

Although the urban forms and their design are those that compound the cities' *physical appearance* and *first noticeable aspect*, in urban sociology studies the focus is upon *the inhabitants* with all their individual aspirations and collective conflicts (Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard apud LeGates, 1997: 170) that hold the power to modify or restructure the entire social infrastructure. Thus, we refer to the city as to a *matrix of relationships* in which the

<sup>22</sup> In Romanian "Novaci-Români"

<sup>23</sup> In Romanian "Novaci-Străini"

*secondary* ones<sup>24</sup> prevail (ibid.: 192). From this point of view, once again Novaci distinguishes itself from the classical typology of the city, *focusing on a history of social face-to-face relations, primary*<sup>25</sup> and *kinship*. In other words, *the predominant anthropological pattern is the one of the communitarian man*.

City suburbs like Levittown studied by Herbert J. Gans (*Levittown and America* - 1967), Novaci “permits most of its residents to be what they want to be – to center their lives on *home* and *family*, to be among neighbors whom they can trust...” (Herbert J. Gans apud Le Gates, 1997: 64). In other words, we have here a *lost sociability* by the typical booming city. The use of participatory observation highlighted the fact that *local work relationships (labor) are oftentimes also at the formal limit* (the firefighters, the high school’s teaching collective, the city hall officials, etc.). In other words, *the communitarian relations are the social glue for the Novac social segments*, relationships that go beyond mere neighborhood<sup>26</sup> this because the community is *more than just a place*, it is “a set of social ties ... an extraspatial social phenomenon” (Flanagan, 1993: 23). However, neighborhood relations play an important role in the physical anchoring of the social networks, in particular by having “*a high level of identification with their place of residence*” and the *quality and quantity of leisure time spent together*<sup>27</sup> (ibid.).

Kinship is the *main substance* that successfully gives shape to a broadened local community with the most surprising connections. Interestingly, this logic that includes familial attributes can be observed as being handed down including *at the level of the structures of power relations* existent in the studied community. In other words, the Goffmanian concept of “teams” (2003) has as a permanent and incipient structure the family connections. There was only one recorded case highlighted as an exception to the rule (the vice-mayor, did not get along with his first cousin, the milk factory owner), but this does not seem to have a serious impact of destabilizing effects at the general level of symbolic connections and paths in the community.

One of the formulated *hypotheses* refer to the fact the very own *kinship represents the social glue between the individual’s life and the one of the community* by the constant production of social solidarity. However, especially after the ‘90s, in Novaci this assumption remains valid just in the case of *long-term residence*. Once the migration of young people to big cities and other countries started (encouraged by the emergence of two forms of individualism – “metropolis as fate and as chance”, Georg Simmel apud Dungaciu, 2003, p. 173), this type of solidarity seems to suffer a *dissolution caused by the physical distance* which, in turn, produces *social distance*. In other words, the long-term vicinity (itself based on kinship-type of relations) is a source of solidarity as long as a *critical threshold* (which remains to be determined) is not achieved in relation to migration to new generations of Novacs. We highlight the similarities between this particular situation and the type of social networking that occurs in the cities studied by the Chicago School personalities, developed at the level of districts (Michael Young and Peter Willmott apud LeGates, 1997, p. 208, 211). Moreover, *the family is the base unit of the Novac*

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<sup>24</sup> Are those social contacts, with relatively short timestamps of interaction, with formal and impersonal aspects that reclaim the reciprocity cause and penalization in case of the malfunction of the latter (Saxton, 1986: 10). “One characteristic of social interaction is that it takes place in terms of *position* and *role* ... because of the function each person can fulfill for the other. This *function* ... is the basis of most social interactions in our society” (idem: 9-11).

<sup>25</sup> In opposition with the secondary *relations* are the *primary* ones that imply informality, liberty, spontaneity. In this case, the attention is distributed on the *personalized characteristics* of the individual and the relationship implies essential *values* like affectivity, acceptance, compassion, respect, understanding (Louis Wirth apud LeGates, 1997: 192).

<sup>26</sup> Vicinity is a symbolic space determined by the spatial proximity of the individuals and the afferent households, based on *mutual relationships in which support each other emotionally and materially*.

<sup>27</sup> In this logic, it remains for further research what does vicinity (neighborhood) actually means for every social category taking into account a classification function in relation with variables such as *gender, age, socio-economic status, household’s placement, the networks ‘degree of diffusion in territory*.

*urban community* and *the household remains* “the main family unit”<sup>28</sup>, a workspace that offers family members a chance to avoid the threshold of poverty (Vulcănescu, 1997, p. 32) determined by the underdeveloped economic climate<sup>29</sup>.

One element that seems to have undergone changes over time is *the mechanism of courtship*, the first step in the development of the family institution, a process that, on a basis of mutual attractiveness, determines the couple yielding (Saxton, 1986, p. 167). Until the abolishment of the village’s round dance (1997), the system of courtship was usually a *traditional* one: the dance was performed under the gaze of adults and with their permission. The *assumption* made in this case is that the *symbolism of courtship disappeared at the same time with the elimination of the central element of the round dance*, an influence sent from the urban/metropolitan/media areas right into the collective mentality of the Novac youth<sup>30</sup>. *The lack of spaces with social or cultural significance* generated, in addition, *the appearance of courtship on streets, the terraces or at the mall in Tg. Jiu* a phenomenon which modified the relations *within* the couple (the “macho” immature male social behavior is encouraged, the alcohol redraws the pattern of social networking, weakened relationship substance, etc.). This hypothesis remains to be verified in what extent depends on the social or economical category, the type of family or education of which young people belong to.

An interesting feature of the Novac community is *the culture of friendship* and *the increased familiarity*. The greetings and foreigners’ social recognition – who are not considered to be strangers *per se* but potential friends and confidants; the stopping of the car in the middle of the street just to greet a pedestrian; discussions on various topics (personal or politics related) while shopping with unknown individuals from the same locality; scheduled free time or, alternatively, randomly spent on nearby terraces; the *very high speed of information movement (without altering it)*<sup>31</sup> within the community; entrusting emergency chores to neighbors or relatives; leisure with family and work colleagues (plans that overlap) by “going out” or playing sport on the local high school’s fields etc. All these examples show the high degree of familiarity among *all* city residents. In other words, we are dealing with a *city full of people who are not and do not behave as strangers to each other*, unlike the ideal type of city that is characterized by “mistrust, social deprivation and materialism” (Michael Young apud LeGates and Peter Willmott, 1997, p. 207). Moreover, the community distinguishes itself by an extremely low number of law-breaking events, an effect of the quality of the social contacts and the close network relations. Also, the degree of the familiarity and culture of friendship manifest themselves not by the locals towards locals, but also towards foreigners interested in studying the local realities. In other words, we recorded regardless of position, social status or location, *an availability of communication with outsiders* on behalf of the local inhabitants, situations that facilitated the researcher’s insertion into the studied universe. Trying to start a conversation with and initiate any outsider interested of the local development proves *the community’s openness towards its knowledge from outside*.

Typically, in urban areas we are dealing with an *intentional and preferential interaction of the individuals* (Flanagan, 1993, p. 25). However, in Novaci appears to be little interaction provoked by the nature of the social functions. Moreover, here one can identify a recipe specific

<sup>28</sup> “Of all the crossing social circles: age, mentality, interests, political or wealth adherences, the family group is of course the main one in a village’s life and without its understanding, the village’s life is incomprehensible. ... Thus, family is the cell around which the entire social rural realities revolve. The family is understood both as a ‘community of blood’, and especially in the form of ‘work and fate community’ of those who live under one roof in the same household and form a working unit the same” (Vulcănescu, 1997, p. 33).

<sup>29</sup> Through the high percentage of unemployed workers or peasants who practice subsistence agriculture, lack of jobs for young people, the nature of occupations, etc.).

<sup>30</sup> “The young shifted from the daylight round dance to the night one” (mayor interview).

<sup>31</sup> A significant part of pedestrians were approaching and asking us if we are *the* Bucharest students. We were always greeted by persons even unknown by us – and all these were happening quite early, from the second and third day of the field research.

to the rural order: the *residential proximity* (which is rarely by choice) *determines the appearance and maintenance of a network of strong interactions*, simultaneously with a *behavior of mutual aid*.

The same Flanagan, following his studies in Boston, found that there was a *positive correlation between architectural design and social interaction in the neighborhood*, giving the example of women's social meeting, encouraged by the layout of the kitchen windows face-to-face to the ones of the house from vis-a-vis (ibid.). In Novaci, the fact that the houses' settlement is further from the fence which delimits the street from the property does not invalidate the above correlation which can be supported both by *the mechanism of ad-hoc meetings near the benches settled in front of the gates* and by *the daily work in the garden that encourages the social interaction with the people walking on the streets*. Furthermore, *the wooden benches represent an area of socialization*, especially for children and elders, which favors the idea of an *instrument of social control* of children left unattended by their parents who work during the day.

Because of the *physical distance*, we estimated above the consolidation of a *social distancing*. Louis Wirth claimed that "frequent close physical contact, coupled with great social distance, accentuates the reserve of *unattached* individuals toward one another and, unless compensated for by other opportunities for response, gives rise to *loneliness*" (apud LeGates Louis Wirth, 1997, p. 192), the very same thing that Georg Simmel identified as the *citizen's reserved behavior* or *antipathy* (Georg Simmel apud Dungaciu, 2003, p. 163).

In most cases, this detachment takes its early stages the form of a *generational rupture* between the young and adults (not necessarily older people.) The urban type of culture that surrounds the young ones leads to a *fracture of social contacts*, a fact recognized by both parties: *the young* refer to the Novac solidarity as to something "ancient", out of the current state of the present social functioning, which cannot provide solutions to faced challenges; and *adults* have two ways of addressing. The first is the *unspoken disapproval* because of the trouble caused by the change of the communitarian order (and saying "they with theirs, we with ours"), and the second perspective is one of *approval and encouragement*.

The adults' desire of a better future (and different from their own) for the kids leads to a change of the general idea in the community's development. They prefer to send them to study in the city, to have more opportunities, all at the expense of the household work and through serious financial efforts because of the absence of a real future (and professional status) in the community (no jobs). *This duality between rational and emotional begins to be crystallized into a major issue* that is more and more relevant in local collective mentalities.

It is interesting that in the discussion about social distance (between generations), the *television* is seen as *the main threat* to youth development and also to the whole community, *regardless of the social class or demographic category*. *It is considered responsible for both initiating or deepening the generational division and shifting of the mentality of youth*. In other words, *the main tool that inserts the urbanization tendencies and attitudes in the Novac mental is the media*. By promoting a "TV diet" (Clark, 1996, p. 125), overall, there is a tendency towards uniformizing spaces in terms of values, attitudes, expectations, representations and ambitions (ibid., p. 2-3) - of either material, symbolic or physical nature (ibid., p. 2).

As mentioned above, the nature of social interaction is given not by inserting the individual in the community in a functionalist way, but of the place related to an ensemble formed by kinship and the network of social contacts, established face-to-face. As a result, *the formal relations in Novaci are identified, in fact, to be very close to the formal limit*: most public servants are among *relatives* with one another, the local businesses are ordered on grounds of kinship and controlled by a small number of individuals (no more than 8 people), the work relationships are *de-formalized* by the frequent joint of the personal and professional dimension, the increased number of people who practice *subsistence agriculture* and do not need an institutional support, the lack of cultural centers to promote formal activities and to build on the existing *cultural heritage*, the low percentage of employees (6% of total population)

halved compared to 1997 etc. Thus, the principle of the Novac order is that of a *status hierarchy based on kinship*, in which the Goffmanian performance of appearances appears (or the so called “masks”).

Moreover, regarding the relations *at the institutional level*, one cannot observe a *functional and constant connection*, and the main “beneficiary” of the system’s failure and consequences is the community itself. A number of illnesses or even the quality of youth integration in the community could be explained by *ignorance* - in turn caused by a functional non-communication (sic!) between various local components of the formal social structure. For instance, if in the *school-hospital-city hall trio, instead of a role-play and exchange of social masks* (Goffman, 2003) *associated with an insertion linked to the kinship status*, it could be a continuous flow of information supported by permanent institutional collaborations, then it is most likely that the incidence of heart disease or cases of tuberculosis (due to *poor nutrition*) would be reduced, just like the health problems related to *basic personal hygiene* would be minimized in importance or frequency. Likewise, the lack of an interaction between *educational institutions and the House of Culture or the great exemplary personalities* leads to a *weakening in children’s attachment for the community they belong to*. Thus, *the absence* of a minimal medical education or the “objective” deficiency in children’s access to the local social history, along with a *non-assumed elite-role in the benefit of the community* demonstrates the weakened power of the very own local institutions. This, in turn, leads to a serious deficiency in terms of legitimacy for the key institutions.

Another type of formal relationship is the one between a local inhabitant and the parishes to which he belongs to. The common indivisible ownership (in Romanian “obște devălmașă”) is an ancient formula organizing on legal and democratic principles (equal rights, decisions by majority vote, etc.), typical for the Romanian territory, in which the collectivity (the association of family households) has the power by law on a territory jointly ruled (Stahl, 1998, p. 29, 64). In these circumstances, the particular individual is the owner of an *indivisible* part of the land (meadows, forests, grasslands, mountains). However, sociologically speaking, *the parish requires a certain kind of social life, with an internal logic, specific laws and special individual behavior*. In the Novac community, there were nine historical parishes, rightened by law for the first time in 1910 by the Forest Regulation. They have continued to be *the main mechanism of organizing the village* until the community was affected by the communist “reform” in agriculture after 1949. Following the fall of the communist regime, the families heirs (once again owners in the joint property) have initiated a *series of legislative steps* to regulate the parishes once again from a legal standpoint and to restore the ownership rights to the heirs still alive. A partial result was achieved after 2001, when parishes acquired legal recognition by the ‘Lupu’ Law (no. 1/2000). It would be interesting to note that “most of today’s pending in court litigations are those related to property reform in the Novac community”<sup>32</sup>.

The *initiative* of an entire body of heirs of the lands administered by the parishes demonstrates *the people’s need to return to the ancient order*, considered as “just”. Currently, the reinstated and re-established parishes are from a legal point of view non-profit organizations, although the discontents regarding the *struggle for leadership positions in parishes* unveils the researcher a distinct *level of local businesses*. Typically, political leaders and large employers in the area get to manage the parishes from a *paid* president position that is no longer occupied by “the old and wise” (apud P. Stahl Stahl, 1998, vol. I). Moreover, *the voting activities inside a parish are governed by rules that change depending on the stakes of the decision*, through a *majority controlled* which does not coincide with the owners of the lots (approximately 10% of total number of owners).

Regarding the *subjective reality* of individuals, it can be directly influenced by *existing power centers* in a community (Weber). Some of them a) can be highlighted on a *symbolic*

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<sup>32</sup> According to the local Judge.

*infrastructure* basis (teachers, leading peasant, midwives, confessor, etc.) and endowed with a kind of *authority based on tradition*, b) others can be *delegated with legal authority*, providing the community 'formal' and 'depersonalized' legitimacy (mayor, priest, school or hospital director, lawyer, journalist, etc.) and c) the third segment can be one consisted of holders of *authority based on charisma*, informal leaders such as "village elder", the personality of the village, confessors, intellectuals, etc. Thus, *the more stable the community becomes, the more intense communitarian network of interactions appears between these centers and the local people*. In addition, *the greater legitimacy gained by the local power center, the "more settled" the community is*.

This social logic<sup>33</sup> oversteps the stage which Goffman called "impression management"<sup>34</sup> because of the fact that authority structures locally recognized generate a certain type of *symbolic social order*, next to the one resulting from the interests management. Thus, the locality remarks itself by possessing a *specific social capital*<sup>35</sup> (Putnam).

However, the Novac community appears to suffer from the erosion of not only the state institutions' authority, but also of the ones that, traditionally, benefitted from *respect and social recognition*. The cause appears to be the increased frequency of *the negative personal examples* which attract the respect lowering of the entire class of which they belong to. Thus, *doctors' authority* in the community is dropping, they are being perceived not as potential rescuers, but as "businessmen of people's money". A similar situation of *significant decrease in attributed social respect* is the one of the *religious leaders* that, with only one exception out of four priests, are no longer considered to be "doctors of souls" (one is a "ladiesman", another a "businessman", and the third "has no gift from God"). Whenever, in a dialogue with parishioners, we talk about them, we got the same expression in response over and over again that suggests a *disapproval of the "discovered" actions*: "one must do what the [Holy] Book says, and not what the priest does!". In other words, although the authority's erosion is visible, *the local people do not depart from faith, but only from the one that does not practice it (right)*. As proof, there is no confusion made between the idea of Church, priest or faith, which demonstrates *the establishment of the community's order and social logic (still) on a symbolic dimension*. Following the field interviews, *the general impression is that divinity and the world of the unseen* is always the referential. This can be illustrated even by the usage and its frequency of the religious connotation terms or transcendental substrate that seem to persist in the current language of the people (consciously or unconsciously used), paradoxically, even when the topic is a business one ("half-witted<sup>36</sup>, he doesn't know how to do business. And more, he complicates mine!"; "I don't know where that soul might have come out of that girl cause I hadn't seen it", "we're sinners, what can we do?", "may God give to everyone!").

Regarding the *networks of local interests* within the Novac community, we identified and labeled, at a first analysis, two categories: a) networks with *symbolic and collective infrastructure* and 2) networks of interest *structured on the principle of individual interest*. In the first case we refer to those *social and cultural interactions, constant over the years but usually initiated before 1990, maintained with the local personalities* (usually intellectuals) considered

<sup>33</sup> "Social life is essentially product or a creative individual result of interactions with significant others" (Goffman, 2003, p.11)

<sup>34</sup> The performance put in play has symbols and significances attached, that lead us to behavior patterns. Thus, the interaction is being attached to the control sign, the development direction referring to the control of the observant's impression over the emitter.

<sup>35</sup> Adjacent interest: are the individuals that left town and got in positions of success coming back to invest, using the levers of power in the locality where they were born in? For example, the hospital of which the mayor said was extremely well equipped due to a local character, a former minister. It is a perverse effect or a return to the basic idea that institutions are formalized expression of a social need? Successful businesses will be affected positively on the community or just the individual?

<sup>36</sup> In Romanian "e sărac cu duhu!". It could be also mot-a-mot translated with "his soul is poor" (but this expression does not possess the religious connotation as it does in Romanian).

as symbol-persons. These aim to an *increased collective solidarity* and to the *preservation of local specificities*, and manifest a relatively large opening for those interested, even though they benefit from a social space more and more limited. The second type of local networks has a structure which mandatory combines two principles: 1) the need for a *political representative* in the decision-making core of the group formed and 2) the resulting loyalty to the initiator / initiators of the network by *interweaving interests with kinship* (either political persons, unemployed, entrepreneurs, civil servants, doctors, etc.). Such networks involve the business environment in the *wood processing industry* (private forest districts), *transportation* (international affairs), *food service* (dairy plant, bakery), *pharmaceuticals and utilities* (roads, gas station, auto service) in which are necessarily involved, as stated above, *key characters with access to the levers of local or regional power* (city hall, common indivisible ownership, prefecture, police) – *but this does not automatically mean homogeneity between the administrative authorities and local entrepreneurs.*

In terms of *features*, these networks have a *limited number of members*; hold *key information*; present a kind of social solidarity of *mutual aid* (“one hand washes the other”). At the same time, the *requirements* imposed to the members are *availability, loyalty, keeping important secrets, the local management of impressions.* The main purpose of these units is a *financial* (obtaining maximum profit with minimum investments) and *immediate outcome* (most often labeled by the Novacs as “local bombs”). The main problem with this type of network operation is *the voidness of a useful public finality.* Impression management techniques in the public’s eyes, next to the nature of the motives takes the researcher to the idea of a *theatre play* that, in the *backstage*, has unknown mechanisms to the audience. And *the main consequence* (on the long term) is *the fragmentation of social space.*

#### 4.6. Urbanistic aspects

Since the late '70s, there was a trend in the urban sociology domain to research *correlations between human behavior and physical environment* (Fowler, 1987, p. 365). Although it failed to identify a strong link between architecture and its influence on behavior, one can operate with concepts of “bad and good design” (LeGates, 1997, p. 79). Following this point of view, we established a classification of the Novac accommodations which, apparently, follow three patterns of development that send to the idea of a *community’s settlement in time.*

The first stylistical pattern is the peasant/rural one, characterized by *traditional architectural elements* (wood carving, porch, small windows, thick beams, etc.), *small scale dimensions* of the living space and *horizontally stretched* (Bernea, 2006, p. 141). The houses are made of wood (about 100 left) or brick and covered with “straws or tiles, depending on place and financial competence” (Vulcănescu, 1997, p. 34) and are assigned in a household peasant type of order, carefully budgeted.

The second type of space present in the Novac community is the one that emerged during the *communist regime.* There are *no significant differences* between these two first patterns of architectural development recorded. Similar to the traditional peasant houses, the homes in discussion are made out of brick and covered with plaster, small in size and placed near the alleys and streets, the only difference being the roof made of tin. Moreover, both types of constructions present *the house as part of the household*, and not just a living space. The household usually comprises: “1) the living house, 2) the yard with outhouses, 3) enclosed garden or orchard together with a wooden fence” (ibid.) and 4) space for animals (usually cows and watchdogs). The *garden* is seen as a *farm stead* (in Romanian “*curte*”), meaning *a place of work, daily life and peace.* However, there can be identified *a tendency of the garden’s adornment through well-groomed and natural floral arrangements*, which are added to the *vine.* Regarding the *elements exterior to the household*, characteristic to the first two timeframes discussed, we can also mention the existence, on the streets and alleys, of still operating *communal fountains* (used mainly before the construction of the water and sewerage network), filled with

inscriptions of religious connotation or attached icons. The second element is the *bench outside the gate* which represents an *area of constant socialization*, of *ad-hoc meetings* and, at the same time, an *instrument of social control*.

The third stylistical level refers to the *chaotic order* (sic!) which has, in its turn, *three levels of manifestation*: a) modernization of old houses, b) construction of new houses to live in, c) construction of villas (holiday houses). *The modernization of old houses* belonging to the earlier orders and times (traditional or more recent, from the communist era), many times, create the idea of a *visual discomfort* because of all the contrasts (or lack of style). Another trend (which has no general character) is to build an annex or a storage place, out of AAC (autoclaved aerated concrete) covered with a metal roof or out of concrete in the yard for car parking, again lacking an identifiable architectural style.

The construction of new homes offers a perspective on the future architectural style of the Novac space, characterized by *stylistical fractures*. The buildings are made in contrast to the traditional ones and have a shock effect for the pedestrian: the *sizes* achieved are impressive, the development takes place both *vertically* and horizontally, the aggressive *colors* palette (pink, green, purple, red), *block* exterior type of aspect, with metal or shingled roof, double glazing windows. The *front gate* that separates the personal environment from the public space has a closure of a *maximum opacity*, and the *courtyard* is mostly covered with concrete, and the decorative items present are of a questionable quality. Thus, some *clear differences in reference* to the household idea can be deduced: it appears to have been replaced with the idea of simple *housing decoration* (flower pots, garden furniture, garden dwarves etc.) and filled with *kitsch* elements (as excess and low content) that take a central spot.

The recent housing neighborhoods, where there is a no network of social contacts with high intensity, the individuals' need to be respected is stronger than the one in a highly vascularized space. In order to minimize the social relations' quality deficit, individuals rely on "quantity of possessions with which the person surrounds himself" (Michael Young and Peter Willmott apud LeGates, 1997, p. 215), a trend identified in the Novac community. Following the investigations made, it was possible to identify the *socio-economic origin* of the owners, mostly *local shepherds* who, while investing a huge amount of money in construction and furniture, *choose not to live in them*, but in a separate small room without the facilities and conditions present in the newly built house. Although considered inadequate by the elite ("the place died in them") and by the local peasants ("it is neither here nor there"<sup>37</sup>), the phenomenon is not seen as "local snobbery" (ibid., p. 214), but as *a manifestation* of previously unfortunate deprivations from the past and of a typical shepherd's mentality ("to have more than your neighbor"). In most societies, the sign of growth in the socio-professional hierarchy of the urbanized individual is the house (ibid.).

The last manifestation level in the contemporary stylistical approach we are referring to is the *construction of villas or holiday homes* which do not differ significantly from the aesthetic elements mentioned above (*except for the living part*). While shepherds *choose* not to live in their new houses, the owners of the villas are Novacs that *left the community in the past* and reached a high professional development stage. In this case, their relationship to the Novac space has *suffered mutations through their alienation from the architectural traditional style of the area*.

Neil Smith argued in *The New Urban Frontier. Gentrification and the revanchist city* (1996) that "economic expansion today no longer takes place purely via absolute geographical expansion but rather involves internal differentiation of already developed spaces" (Smith, 1996, p. XVI). Gentrification is a tendency identified after the 70s that denotes the changing dynamics of housing axis that, "rather than leaving for the suburbs, some affluent urbanites were leaving established middle-class enclaves within the city for other inner-city

<sup>37</sup> In Romanian "sună ca nuca-n perete", or mot-a-mot translation: "sounds like the nut-n the wall".

neighborhoods occupied by poor or less affluent populations ... The pattern, by now as well-known as suburbanization itself, came to be termed gentrification”, a mechanism concentrated on the *afflux of private capital* (Flanagan, 1993, p. 68). Thus, we are able to identify in the Novac community a *gentrification tendency* or a re-urbanization process through the “*absent owners*”. Still, such a *tendency of re-urbanization and modernization* of Novaci is yet on a lower development stage if we take into account the statistical data from the area. For a population of 6.000 inhabitants, in Novaci are registered 2245 homes, out of which 2.100 are made of brick and 100 made of wood, a fact that demonstrates the stability of the first two layers in the social (architectural and cultural) local order. Moreover, in town are no more or less than 5 *blocks of flats*, with few floors, which denotes *the low degree of urbanization*. In other words, inside the community lies a *curious joint*, apparently non-conflictual, between two types of mentalities, unequally distributed, with direct manifestations on the architectural and living space level: 1) the mentality of the “newly enriched”, centered on the house (that is gaining more and more ground), and 2) the rural/peasant type of mentality in which the housing idea, the family relationships and the constant social contacts come first.

For Le Corbusier, the street must become in the modern city a new type of organism, with a very well delimited functional role, around which the city must be projected (LeGates, 1997, p. 104). The social role of the street becomes a subject of interest, playing a role of both a socialization space or traffic management, and one of citizens’ security. Regarding the security and safety, Jane Jacobs created a theory opposed to Corbusianism, that tries to retrieve the sociability segment of the urban community that is diluted by the city’s mechanisms: in order to keep a city safe, the safety and control over the streets must be preserved (idem, p. 105); and such a thing is generated by the *quality and intensity of the local interactions*, next to the encouragement of *the direct social surveillance* made by the citizens themselves through the multiplication of the “meeting places”, of the small shops or other socialization areas (idem, p. 106). The Novac community’s safety is generated, on the one hand by the specificity of the social relationships, and on the other by the existence of places that favor the socialization process and group formation: downtown terraces (near the market), city hall, park, intersections dominated by monuments of historical value etc.

Novaci’s mapping is easily done by identifying and revealing the *main crossroads* but outside this perimeter (locally defined as *centre*), the streets, the houses and the lack of wide spaces takes us, once again, to the locality’s minimal level of urbanization. The first intersection (and most important, in the town’s center) has 2 main axes where one can find: *the socio-economical axis* (dispensary and the base of the Forces of employment, city hall, the Parâng hotel and restaurant, the milk factory), *the symbolical value axis* (Monument for Heroes, school, market, Church up the hill). The second intersection has also 2 main axes where one can find the same socio-economical one next to the one linking the kindergarden, police, and population registration. We, thus, observe that the first axis is delimited by 2 churches (the old one and the one up the hill), a fact that can gain a symbolic value. Regarding the *center town*, we can observe that the tendency of its value modification, of re-settlement from the dominant symbolic dimension to the mainly functional and institutional one. Another fact well noticing is the identification of two other streets with symbolic content: one of the *intellectuals*, where most of the cultivated individuals live, a tradition kept from the old village of Novaci, and the road towards Rânca, the pride, joy and hope of the Novacs.

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## SOCIAL PROJECTS FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS, WITHIN THE PANDEMIC CONTEXT

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**Abstract:** *In the century of technological evolution and artificial intelligence, of advanced social and medical statistics calculations, of high-performance medical research, a virus paradoxically caused and inexplicable and incontrollable pandemic. Its effects are measured on a short and medium term only in human losses, but the psycho-social and economic impact is on the long term. An entire world of direct reality relocated itself within the virtual, as a consequence of the local and world governmental measures that quarantined the population, in order to protect it from COVID-19. Which were the changes in the dynamics of social life that were triggered by these decisions regarding isolation and physical distancing? For some of us, political decisions stimulated the build-up of resilience and adapting mechanisms for the new context, for others it increased the feeling of alienation and started an alteration of the mental health status. But what about those that already had it installed? To them and to those which were diagnosed with mental illnesses during the Coronavirus pandemic we dedicate our communication, focused on the analysis of local and national interventions meant to offer direct support services by means of the social projects. Our article aims at studying the reactions of the authorities in the social and health field, during the emergency and alert state, concerning the needs of the persons registered with mental health conditions and also the interventions of the social society, coagulated in order to provide support for this vulnerable category. The analysis of qualitative information will aim to compare local examples to international ones and to create successful methodological patterns, with the purpose of reapplying or extending those functional projects, particularly at local and regional level.*

**Key words:** COVID-19; social distance; support; mental health disorders; social projects.

### 1. Introduction

"It is known that each person's subjective life is multilaterally influenced by the way he or she lives, by whether or not he has acted on the influence of stressors" (Breaz, 2019: 37). The general population's life quality has been under the scope of the international and national welfare policies, especially during the last decades, as technological progress brought with itself a considerable amount of stress and negative outcomes for many of us.

At the beginning of the year 2020, the world faced one of the most serious challenges of the century: a worldwide pandemic caused by an unknown virus that changed the personal, professional, and social lives of each and every citizen of the globe, with the exception of a few remote countries and areas saved by the accelerated spread.

Suddenly, lockdowns were enforced in most countries and people had to remain at home, as the behavior and spreading model of the new virus were still unknown. "The immediate consequences of the pandemic measures adopted have contributed to the aggression of citizens: social inequalities have intensified, and survival in the face of the health crisis has generated economic problems that have limited the opportunities of a large part of the population." (Pricină, 2020: 268). Isolation, fear of contaminating oneself and the loved

ones, worries and concerns about the future, job loss, lack of perspectives affected the general population, causing alarming psychological and emotional symptoms.

For people with mental conditions, the stigma that they bear causes social exclusion and discrimination, even in everyday and so-called normal situations. "The people who consider themselves "normal" build a stigma theory, an ideology that serves to explain the inferiority of those with such an attribute, and to warn of the dangers they represent (Manea 1997)" (Goga and Niță, 2018: 50), ignoring that this affects the *stigmatized* people's self-esteem and ability to socialize and to obtain satisfying life quality.

As the pandemic advanced, the existing symptoms of people with mental disorders became exacerbated and even new ones were triggered; these conditions are also extending the dimensions of social stigma. Increased alcohol and drug, anxiety, panic attacks and sleep problems use are expected. The Covid-19 disease itself can lead to neurological and mental complications and, vice-versa, some pre-existing mental and neurological conditions make the affected individuals more exposed to a higher risk of severe outcomes, including death.

Within this context, international bodies and super-state organizations called for general mobilization and initiated actions and projects meant to reduce the effects of the global crisis.

Currently, there is a strong and need for social projects aiming at providing help for all people, but, particularly, the most vulnerable population categories, in order to build resilience against the negative direct and collateral effects of the coronavirus pandemic, with short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, measured in the stabilization and increase of life quality.

## 2. Clarification of concepts

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1946: 100).

Mental health has been defined „as a state of well-being whereby individuals recognize their abilities, are able to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their communities". (Srivastava, 2011: 75).

According to the definition proposed by DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), "a mental disorder is a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning. Mental disorders are usually associated with significant distress or disability in social, occupational or other important activities".

The term "mental health problems" is used to cover a broad spectrum of conditions, ranging from diagnosable disorders such as anxiety and depression, through to acting out behaviors. The most frequent mental illnesses include depression, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, obsessive-compulsive disorder etc. Each mental illness or disorder influences a person's thoughts, attitudes, feelings in different ways.

At present, mental disorders cannot be cured, but they can be treated effectively, minimizing the symptoms and allowing the individual to function in the family, professional and social environment. The common treatment for mental disorders can involve medication, therapy or a combination of both, depending on the nature and severity of the case (National Institutes of Health, 2007).

## 3. Mental health statistics

A study using available data from 2017 (Ritchie and Roser: 2018) shows that more than 1 in 10 people globally live with a mental health disorder. Dealing with this data is a challenging task in all countries of the world and many conditions remain unassisted and unreported.

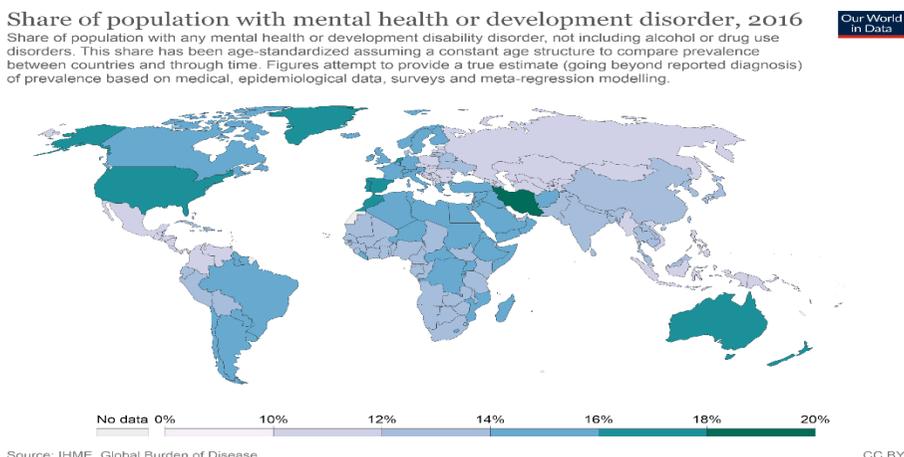
Moreover, in less developed countries, there is a lack of attention and resources allocated for their treatment.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of mental disorders among the global population (2017)**

Disorder	Share of global population with disorder (2017) [difference across countries]	Number of people with disorder (2017)	Share of males : females with disorder (2017)
Any mental health disorder	10.7%	792 million	9.3% males 11.9% females
Depression	3.4% [2-6%]	264 million	2.7% males 4.1% females
Anxiety disorders	3.8% [2.5-7%]	284 million	2.8% males 4.7% females
Bipolar disorder	0.6% [0.3-1.2%]	46 million	0.55% males 0.65% females
Eating disorders (clinical anorexia & bulimia)	0.2% [0.1-1%]	16 million	0.13% males 0.29% females
Schizophrenia	0.3% [0.2-0.4%]	20 million	0.26% males 0.25% females
Any mental or substance use disorder	13% [11-18%]	970 million	12.6% males 13.3% females
Alcohol use disorder	1.4% [0.5-5%]	107 million	2% males 0.8% females
Drug use disorder (excluding alcohol)	0.9% [0.4-3.5%]	71 million	1.3% males 0.6% females

Source: ourworldindata.org/mental-health

**Figure 2: Share and distribution of population with a mental health or development disorder, 2016**



Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease

In the USA, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder are four of the leading causes for mental disability; ca. 3% of the population have more than one mental illness at a time. Ca. 5% of the adults are having difficulties to function in society, due to being affected by a serious mental disorder. About 20% of the doctor's appointments in the US are about anxiety and panic attacks. 8 million people suffer from depression each year, while 2 million have schizophrenia disorders (National Institutes of Health, 2007).

At European level, from the data extracted by the European Commission in August 2020, it resulted that: 3.7% of all deaths in 2016 were caused by mental and behavioral disorders; ca. 13.5% of all hospital beds in the EU in 2018 were psychiatric beds; in 2018, 3.8 million patients with mental and behavioral disorders were discharged from hospitals in the EU; as relative to population size, Germany (data from 2017), Romania, Austria, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland and France recorded the highest number of patients treated for mental and behavioral disorders in 2018; the share of population aged over 15 years that consulted a psychologist, psychiatrist or psychotherapist during the last year prior to the investigation was of 2.1% to 8.1% in all EU member states – Romania had one of the lowest shares, with 0.3% (European Commission, 2020).

In Romania, according to the statistics data collected and published by the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities - ANPDH, at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 there were a total number of 229.621 persons with mental disabilities (adults and children), of which 13.080 were institutionalized and a total number of 114.851 persons with associated disability, of which 2353 were institutionalized. Associated disability means physical and mental disability combined, whereas, in many cases, people with physical disability also develop behavioral and mental disorders, as a consequence of social discrimination and stigma.

#### **4. Mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic**

"In the health research, the term quality of life was widespread, being associated to some fields of study such as sociology, medicine, economics, geography, philosophy[...]" (Motoi and Gheorghită, 2017: 35). Since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, the necessity for health and social research intensified, with the aim of analyzing the life quality of the general population affected by the pandemic, with a particular focus on the vulnerable categories. Specialists and researchers all around the globe showed a particular concern for mental and intellectual disabilities, especially because they can become exacerbated during periods of prolonged stress, under the influence of specific aggravating factors like fear, anxiety and limited access to help. Moreover, there are a number of studies performed prior to the coronavirus pandemic that link social isolation and loneliness to cardiovascular and mental health outcomes and the widespread experience of loneliness has been requiring attention over the past years.

The Covid-19 pandemic has stopped or abruptly disrupted mental health services in 93% of the countries worldwide, as shown by a survey conducted by the WHO from June to August 2020 and published in October 2020. The results coming from 130 countries included in the survey revealed the "devastating impact of COVID-19 on access to mental health services and underscores the urgent need for increased funding" (World Health Organization, 2020a). WHO had also previously drawn the attention on the critical underfunding of mental health. Most of the countries allocated less than 2% of their national budgets for health on meeting the populations' mental health needs.

The results of the above-mentioned survey underline the many ways in which critical mental health services have been disrupted, across different countries:

- Over 60% of the countries reported disruptions in mental health services for vulnerable people, like children and adolescents, older adults and women in need of antenatal and postnatal services.

- 67% declared disruptions related to counseling and psychotherapy, 65% to critical harm reduction services and 45% to opioid agonist maintenance treatment for opioid addiction.
- 35% reported disruptions to emergency interventions (e.g. seizures, substance withdrawal syndromes etc.)
- 30% reported disrupted access to medications for mental and neurological disorders.
- Around 75% reported at least partial disruptions in mental health services in schools and workplaces.

The table below presents the main identified causes of disruptions in services and interventions for mental and neurological syndromes (MNS).

**Table 1: Leading causes of disruptions in MNS-related intervention/services**

Causes	Percentage of countries
Decrease in outpatient volume due to patients not presenting	62.3%
Travel restrictions hindering access to the health facilities for patients	53.8%
Decrease in inpatient volume due to cancellation of elective care	46.9%
Closure of outpatient services as per health authority directive	33.8%
Closure of outpatient disease specific consultation clinics	33.1%
Clinical staff related to MNS disorders deployed to provide COVID-19 relief	31.5%
Insufficient staff to provide services	31.5%
Insufficient Personal Protective Equipment available for health care providers	27.7%
Closure of population level programs	24.6%
Unavailability of health products at health facilities	23.8%
The clinical set up has been designated as COVID-19 care facility	19.2%
Inpatient services/ hospital beds not available	12.3%

Source: WHO (2020a: 25)

The countries participating in the study were also asked to report on any ongoing or planned study related to the impact of Covid-19 on mental/brain health and substance use, carried out by the government or by any other stakeholders. Thus, 66% of the assessed countries reported such studies, the types of studies related to mental health being the most frequent (65%).

According to a number of researches performed in the USA, about 4 in 10 adults reported symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorder during the pandemic, compared to 1 in 10 adults that experienced the same symptoms from January to June 2019 (Panchal, Kamal, Cox et al., 2021).

- In January 2021, 41% reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder (this rate has been stable since the beginning of the pandemic).
- A survey from June 2020 reveals that 13% reported new or increased substance use due to the stress caused by the coronavirus situation; 11% of adults reported suicidal thoughts during the past 30 days.
- Data collected during the first half of 2020 show that deaths caused by drug overdose were more pronounced from March to May (the start of the pandemic-related lockdowns).

According to a recent poll conducted by UNICEF, the COVID-19 crisis is having a major impact on the mental health of adolescents and young people revealed that more than 25% of the 8 thousand participants experienced anxiety and 15% depression (UNICEF, 2020).

In Romania, a study performed by the specialists of the Romanian Institute for Integrative Psychotherapy (Institutul Roman de Psihoterapie Integrativa: 2020), performed in the month of March, 2020, at two weeks after the introduction of the emergency state, based on a questionnaire applied online on a batch of 1000 respondents living in Romania, aged above 18 years, revealed that the general population experienced a wide range of negative feelings related to the recently declared pandemic. Thus, 42% of the respondents felt sad, 35% felt concern and the sensation of being blocked ; after the first two weeks since the adoption of the emergency state in Romania, 39.4% of the respondents felt anxious, nervous or stressed, 21.4% were disappointed or at risk of depression and 11.6% could not manage their activities related to "staying at home". But, as the study further outlines, these data, correlated with the coping strategies used by the participants in the study, show that the prognosis for the next 30 days was just starting to get worse. 48.8 % of the participants stated that they would choose to receive help from a psychotherapist in order to cope with the emergency situation, if this would be free of charge, but a large percentage, of 41.1% would not choose to access this possibility.

### 5. Strategic approaches

Even prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the *WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020* (World Health Organization, 2013) proposed an interdependent approach based on three essential objectives:

- Improve the mental well-being of population and reduce the burden of mental disorders, with a special focus on vulnerable groups and risk behaviours.
- respect the rights of people with mental health problems and provide equal access to the means to obtain the highest life quality, without stigma and discrimination.
- provide accessible and effective mental health services for the people with mental/intellectual disabilities and their families.

The Plan thus provided the necessary background, orientation and principles for all measures that need to be taken in the pandemic context, to support the vulnerable category of people with mental disabilities.

In order to ensure that all national mental health plans are elaborated in order to manage the effects of the global coronavirus pandemic on mental health, the World Federation for Mental Health launched, in April 2020, *an appeal to all countries and governments* which, in accordance to its guiding principles and values, listed the following priorities resulting from debates and best practices at national and international levels (World Federation for Mental Health, 2020):

- Guidance on mental health and psychosocial support for vulnerable population categories;
- Community engagement: help the general population to cope with negative feelings and distress generated by the pandemic;
- Fulfilling the populations' mental health needs;
- Strengthen Primary Care roles and healthcare responses;
- Ensure psychiatric care and psychosocial support for people with severe mental illness;
- Strengthen community-based interventions through a multidisciplinary approach;
- Involve stakeholder organizations in all steps of coordination and decision-making process;
- Provide humanitarian aid and response to basic needs for all people affected by poverty and, especially, people with mental disorders lacking basic needs ;
- Support the volunteer sector, non-profit organizations, social enterprises and cooperatives that are forced to shut down their interventions and projects;
- Support families and monitor daily life conditions to prevent domestic abuse;

- Build a system of remote and digital services to communicate and interact with people and to maintain contact;
- Create a network of local aid programmes for first contact, active listening and support.

*The European Parliament resolution of April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences* reveals that there is a great concern about the potential impacts of crisis on the well-being of all people, especially on the most vulnerable groups, calls on the EU and the member states to adopt measures that respect the rights of persons with disabilities, to ensure equal access to healthcare, support services and information and to take external action, in favor of international solidarity and cooperation (European Parliament, 2020 a).

On July 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, the European Parliament adopted a *resolution on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families in the COVID-19 crisis*. The resolution acknowledges that “the situation during COVID-19 is a wake-up call with respect to the attention received by this collective; acknowledges that attention must be provided through strong public health services; calls for consideration to be given to strengthening these through funding at EU level, where appropriate and possible; underlines the importance of appropriate health policies in the Member States” and urges the member states to take appropriate measures to ensure that the mentally disabled persons are receiving the necessary support and to make the therefore necessary investments (European Parliament, 2020 b).

## **6. Interventions and projects for people with mental health disorders within the pandemic context**

On April 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, the World Health Organization published an illustrated stress management guide for coping with adversity (WHO, 2020b) that aims at providing vulnerable people with the necessary tools to develop resilience against stress. It contains practical exercises and self-help techniques, accompanied by drawings and audio exercises.

On May 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Department of Health and Social Care in the United Kingdom announced that community projects supporting people with their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic will benefit from a share of 5 million pounds of additional funding. These funding will help existing services respond to global pandemic and protect the nation’s wellbeing.

The theme of the World Mental Health Day 2020 campaign was “Move For Mental Health – Let’s Invest”. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, the first ever virtual March for Mental Health kicked off, joining thousands of people around the globe in united action. The 24 hour March for Mental Health was powered by *Speak Your Mind*, a nationally-led, globally-united campaign active in 19 countries that lobbies for governments around the world to invest and get involved in solving mental health issues (marchformentalhealth.com, 2020).

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, World Mental Health Day, for the first time ever, WHO hosted a global online advocacy event on mental health. At “The Big Event for Mental Health”, world leaders, mental health experts and celebrity guests joined WHO Director-General, to tell the world what we can all do to improve our mental health and how we can help make sure that quality mental health care is available to everyone (World Health Organization, 2020d).

In China, UNICEF in partnership with an important private company specialized in socializing networks launched an online platform in order to contribute to the reduction of children’s anxiety.

Various initiatives and projects were started all over Europe, as a response to the global calls for help. For example, in Kazakhstan, UNICEF started a platform for individual online counseling services for children, together with coaching sessions for professionals in mental health in schools.

In 2021, UNICEF shall dedicate its renowned two-year report called “State of the World’s Children” to the mental health of children and adolescents, in order to raise awareness

of this world challenge and to encourage governments to give a particular attention to this subject, that may have not be credited with as much importance previously, as it has become since the emergence of the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021).

The Romanian National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions (ANDPDCA), The Council of Institutionalized Youth (CTI), The Center for Legal Resources (CRJ) and UNICEF Romania launched, in September 2020, a new version of the emergency phone-line (*Telverde*: 0800 500 550), dedicated to children and adults from institutionalizing centers (including mental disabled persons), an instrument that was functional since July 2020 and appeared as a necessity in the COVID-19 context, in order to reduce the insecurity feelings of these children and adults, to provide counseling and help and to identify potential abuses. According to UNICEF Romania, during July 13<sup>th</sup> – September 4<sup>th</sup> more than 300 persons called the number, one or several times.

One of the most active NGOs in Romania in the field of vulnerable children's protection, together with one of the strongest communication providers on the market launched, in 2020, a phone line for parents (called *Family Tel*: 0800.070.009), where psychologists offers counselling and help in order to support parents in managing the emotional state of their children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first *Depression Hub* established at the end of 2019 in Romania provides help in approaching mental and emotional health for Romanians suffering for depression and anxiety, but also for those finding themselves at emotional risk, through e-health diagnose and intervention services. It hosts two free and permanently available phone lines, for fighting depression and, respectively, anxiety.

The Romanian Institute for Integrative Psychotherapy also provides free services of information and psycho-emotional support for medical staff and the large public. Under the spectrum of two support projects – *Be well, be informed!* and *Toghether we are stronger!*, more than 100 specialists working pro-bono offer help for all self-isolating and confined persons and general people mentally and emotionally affected by the COVID-19 generated crisis and for the frontline medical staff and their families.

In May 2020, The Ministry of Work and Social Protection in Romania together with a non-governmental partner, started the implementation of a project with European financing, aiming at providing support for vulnerable persons in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project's specific objectives aim at increasing life quality and combatting risk and social exclusion situations for more than 100 thousand elderly persons and persons with disabilities and raising the institutional capacity of more than one thousand public authorities, to meet the needs of vulnerable persons in the COVID-19 context. The budget of the project covers financial support for the activity of the social workers directly involved on the field and for the vulnerable persons.

## 7. Recommendations

“WHO recommends that mental health services be enhanced and strengthened in the pandemic context” (World Health Organization, 2020c: 42), as the disruption of specific care for MNS patients can be life-threatening. It may also expose people to acute suffering, contact with the justice system and can also have an impact on child development (as in the case of mothers lacking prenatal and postnatal services). Some of the proposed specific program activities that could facilitate the meeting of the mentally vulnerable peoples' needs are (2020c: 42-43):

- Emergency and acute care for MNS disorders in inpatient and outpatient settings
- Treatment and care for MNS disorders in outpatient settings:
  - prioritization of face-to-face care for severe or life-threatening situations;
  - maintain critical harm reduction interventions and psychosocial services for people with substance disorders; maintain treatment for severe withdrawal syndromes;

- access to mental health services for all frontline workers in health facilities;
- longer prescription periods and caregivers ensuring that medicines are stored safely;
- digital health care or telemedicine services for: follow-up visits; psychological treatment in non-severe cases; caregivers; group social care; redirect initial care for mild cases to self-help (based on digital or written materials);
- care for isolated people with severe MNS disorders etc.
- Care provided in special residential facilities (hospitals, homes for people with dementia, rehab centres);
- Cross-sector services (in schools, social service units, the criminal justice system);
- Mental health promotion and prevention of MNS disorders, through:
  - access to information about coping methods;
  - supporting safe learning environments for children and youth confined at home;
  - supporting activities that help people stay connected with each other.

## 8. Conclusions

We encourage the implementation of social projects aiming at providing both direct support and access to health support for people with mental disorders, given that they are one of the most vulnerable social categories during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it results from all the considerations above. "Social movement is encouraged and accompanied by the action of the super-state organization" (Sorescu, 2014: 371) – for example, within pandemic context, the European Union, the UN etc. – but we must also consider "the growing significance of the NGOs role as political actors and mediators" (2014: 371).

Especially in a country like Romania, where measures for increasing the life quality of persons with mental disorders were already underfinanced and access to mental health services was poor even before the pandemic outburst, due to economical and state funding conditions, we advise that more attention is given to European financing possibilities and empowering the civil society – actively involved in addressing social problems of vulnerable categories. Using the framework and principles of European and international strategic action plans and programmes, synchronizing governmental and non-governmental efforts, building partnerships and looking at the best practices of other more developed states, that successfully implemented social projects to the benefit of people with mental conditions, before and during the pandemic period could bring significant progress and facilitate an effective management of the crisis situation. As presented above, efforts have already been made in this direction, but solving a critical problem of such extent needs focused, goal-oriented and reliable solutions that are able to reach a large segment of the target-groups.

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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT ON SCHOOL DEVIANCE

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**Abstract:** *Apparently contradictory, the theories that explain the genesis of school deviance focus their attention on dimensions and levels of analysis, which result from the multifactorial nature of deviant behavior. In this article, we will present the main factors that contribute to the appearance and perpetuation of school deviance in the first years of life, during primary socialization, using both theoretical perspectives in sociology, psychosociology and pedagogy and the conclusions of field research on the causality phenomena, respectively to the methods and strategies for ameliorating these phenomena depending on the etiological factors. Primary socialization, the first stage of the process of becoming the individual as a social actor, takes place in the first years of life and results in the formation of a set of values and attitudes that will guide the individual in subsequent actions. In this article, we started from the hypothesis that the family and the school, as the main agents of socialization in the first 7 years of life, play a decisive role in the child's subsequent decision to violate school rules and leave school. We analyzed the literature to find out if and to what extent the stated hypothesis is confirmed by theoretical models and field research conducted so far.*

**Key words:** school deviance; school dropout; school absenteeism; primary socialization; school; family.

### 1. Introduction

The specialized literature offers for analysis an impressive volume of research meant to elucidate the mechanisms by which school dropouts are reached and, especially, to the situations in which it becomes a serious social problem, passing, through its share, from the category of normal social facts in the category of pathological ones. In general, studies that analyze the determinants of absenteeism and dropout propose several types of approaches, depending on the theoretical perspective assumed. First, school deviance is attributed to social, psychological, and demographic variables. This approach starts from the empirical finding that certain characteristics of the student correlate with his predisposition to leave / drop out of school early or, at least, to more subtle evasionist behaviors, such as absenteeism (Barro and Kolstad, 1987). The research question from which most studies operating in such a paradigm start is: "Are there characteristics that differentiate potential graduates from those who will not finish high school and, if so, are these characteristics measurable, using data available in school records?" (Barrington and Bryan, 1989: 310) This approach, dominant in the years 1980-1990, takes into account explanatory variables such as: sex, age, marital status, occupational status, IQ, temperamental type, higher personality factors, political orientation, religious orientation, etc.

Since the 1990s, the emphasis has shifted from the statistical correlations between school dropout / absenteeism and individual psycho-socio-demographic predictors to the analysis and understanding of the behavior of the individual in that life context. The approach remains predominantly individualistic, the only methodological and gnoseological transition being the one from individualistic neopositivism to phenomenological and interpretive approaches, par excellence also individualistic. In the knowledge of the etiology of absenteeism

and dropout, the analysis of school documents and statistical correlations no longer play a decisive role, their place being taken by methods and, implicitly, the analysis of qualitative data, obtained mainly on the basis of in-depth interviews. We mention here the study of Jeremy Finn (1989), quoted no less than 4182 times. It presents the two dominant ways of analyzing school dropout used by researchers in the field until the end of the ninth decade of the last century:

- a) statistical approach, focused on identifying statistical correlations and regularities;
- b) the interventionist approach, which consists of measures to prevent and combat the phenomenon (what today we would call "social policy studies").

The two approaches, Finn argues, although based on "good ideas, not to mention good intentions" (Finn, 1989: 118), have major limitations in elucidating the triggers of absenteeism and abandonment. To fight the effect, says Finn, we must know the real cause of the problem, and for this we need a new vision on the issue, a holistic and profound vision, lost sight of the efforts made by the scientific community until then: "Few, however, are based on a systematic understanding of developmental processes that lead a person to drop out of school altogether." (Finn, 1989: 118).

The third category of theories subsumed to the understanding of the determining factors in the appearance of the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout are the collectivist ones, which include multiple currents of thought: ecological theories, institutionalist and neoinstitutionalist theories, critical theories, etc. In general, these theories start from the premise that certain variables in the way society is structured and functions - therefore extraindividual variables - largely determine not attending or dropping out of school. For example, we mention the research undertaken by Lee and Burkam (2001). They emphasize the role of school organization in generating deviant behavior, a role neglected or treated as secondary to previously published studies: "Although the major focus of research on school dropout focuses on students' social and academic risk factors, there is a growing in which schools influence these behaviors. Specifically, the way schools are organized in terms of social relations between school members has been shown to influence the involvement of students in school and also the final act of disengagement: dropout." (Lee and Burkam, 2001: 12)

The analysis of the school curriculum to explain the inequalities and the predisposition to disengage among certain categories of students, an approach taken by Bourdieu and Bernstein several decades before, is not enough, say Lee and Burkman, to understand how the school as a social institution is directly involved in the generation of absenteeism and dropout: "Although an increasing number of researches demonstrate the importance of how schools structure their curriculum, all this research investigates the effects of curriculum structure on student performance. There is only a small but growing body of research that focuses on how schools influence students' decision to drop out of school, and how school structure - urbanity, positioning and size - can influence this important decision." (Lee and Burkam, 2001: 12).

Four years later, Rumberger and Palardy (2005) publish another article, also in a neo-institutionalist key, in which they analyze the relationship between absenteeism / dropout and the characteristics of school institutions. Several conclusions are worth noting: "schools that are effective in promoting learning (increasing school performance) are not necessarily effective in reducing dropout rates" (Rumberger and Palardy, 2005: 3) and "the characteristics of schools that have contributed to performance in one field often did not contribute to performance in another field" (Rumberger and Palardy, 2005: 3). The two major agents of primary socialization, school and family (Otovescu, 2009: 230), have been the subject of extensive analyzes on how they may or may not predispose to the onset of school deviance.

## 2. Family environment

In general, studies bring to the fore significant correlations between parenting style in the family of origin and school dropout. The concept of "parenting style" was established by D. Baumrind (1973) to designate a specific orientation of the system of values-attitudes and

behaviors that parents manifest in relation to the child. Depending on the degree of reporting, Baumrind identified 5 parental styles: subjective authoritarian, objective authoritarian, careless, permissive and overprotective. In general, a lax, overly permissive parenting style is associated with high rates of school failure and dropout (Alexander, Entwisle and Horsey, 1997). In contrast, a rather authoritarian parenting style seems to discourage early school leaving and encourage performance (Glasgow, et al, 1997).

The family is the main agent of socialization in the first 7 years of life, and the way in which it performs its functions that justify its status as a fundamental social institution depends largely on the educational and professional future of children. It is certain that "the development and socio-professional integration of the child depends on the way in which the primary socialization process in the family takes place" (Nistor, 2018: 44) and "dysfunctions within the family have consequences on spouses, children, family relations with the outside, these becoming evident in the conditions of partner separation (separation in fact or divorce), family abandonment, domestic violence or in the conditions of juvenile delinquency" (Mihăilescu, 2003: 165). Certain structural or functional deficiencies in the family can affect children's socialization. The loss of a parent, through death or divorce, will strongly influence the child's choice to leave school (Lee and Croninger, 2001). Children who grow up and live with both parents are more likely to apply and be admitted to college, while the divorce or death of one parent can significantly affect the school and career path, against a depressive and anxious background, dominated by uncertainty and axio-normative instability.

Another interesting finding, observed following successive research, is that the risk of dropping out of school is higher the lower the share capital of parents (Lee and Croninger, 2001). For this reason, the family-community relationship indirectly affects the child-school relationship. Families withdrawn from community life, characterized by weak neighborhood relationships and superficial relationships with relatives and extended family, show major deficiencies in children's socialization in accordance with the educational ideal and, statistically, more often encounter difficulties in their socio-professional integration, and regularity is maintained regardless of the socio-economic and educational status of the parents, geographical positioning or other parasitic variables. One of the explanations brings into question the child's takeover of precarious relational patterns, which can go hand in hand with the development of psychological disorders (school phobia, social anxiety, avoidant personality disorder, etc.). It is also plausible to socialize a culture contrary to the dominant one. This happens especially in the case of families from the extreme classes of society: the subclass or upper class, which socialize cultural elements different from the statistically majority. The studies are at the beginning, and the mentioned explanations only partially elucidate the mechanisms by which the low social capital of the family becomes a predictor of school dropout.

What is certain is that in the parent-child interaction the linguistic, cognitive and relational skills are developed, but also the will, the affectivity and the motivation, which are decisive in the development and optimization of the child's relationship with himself and the extra-family environment. With these premises, created through socialization, the child, at the age of 7, has the "baggage" necessary to assimilate the school culture. In the classroom, children need to interact and adapt to an environment that differs more or less from the family environment. The smaller the discrepancy between family culture and school culture, the faster school success occurs. Obviously, we are not talking here about determinism or fatalism, but about social patterns, which differ from case to case. The role of the child, of biological, genetic, ascriptive and temperamental factors, which can outweigh to a lesser or lesser extent the influence of socialized cultural elements in the family, must not be denied. Then, the child is not a passive "receiver" of external influences, but an active participant in the socialization process, which, in a constructivist sense, manifests itself in a double sense: from society to the individual, but also from the individual to society. The child is not only a product of the environment, but a distinct individuality, an active participant in his own formation: "he is able not only to receive,

but also to produce, process and communicate meanings, and on this basis to selectively internalize and in personalized forms the social structure" (Stănculescu, 1996: 205-206).

The constant emotional and moral support from parents influences the child's ability to cope with failure and pressure, helping him to adapt to the rules of the school environment. Therefore, children with receptive and involved parents are likely to achieve better results at school, which is why the school-family partnership is indispensable in preventing dropouts. If the child's education stops in the classroom and there are no learning opportunities at home, it is hard to believe that the student will end up with outstanding educational performance. Learning at home and building a generally positive attitude towards school are issues related to family culture and are learned in the first 7 years of life, during primary socialization. The first games with letters and numbers facilitate the development of cognitive processes and role-playing games, part of anticipatory socialization, fulfill well-defined functions in school integration in the following years. Obviously, the ideal situation requires the convergence of the school-family value system. If parents show a hostile attitude towards school, then, statistically, the road to school failure is almost certain. At the same time, letting the student do "what he wants" means, in fact, orienting him towards failure. Regardless of good intentions and his ability to set goals, the child will not have the behavioral self-control and self-regulatory mechanisms necessary to achieve these goals, these skills being specific to the next stages of psycho-emotional development. For this reason, a certain degree of pressure and parental control are beneficial in directing the training process, while conducting them in school, through regular evaluations.

A major problem arises when the family is no longer able to perform these roles properly. We mentioned the loss of a parent, through death or divorce, this being the cause that has the richest scientific literature. In Romania, but not only, another phenomenon seems to affect the right and access to education of children, namely the temporary emigration of one or both parents to work abroad. A qualitative research conducted by "Salvați Copiii" among this category of students draws attention to the many particularly worrying facets of the problem. First, "among adolescents, especially among boys, who have both parents working abroad, there is a tendency to drop out of school" (Salvați Copiii, 2007: 51). Secondly, unlike abandonment, which is more common among boys, as confirmed by statistics and theoretical models, absenteeism does not seem to take into account gender. Girls and boys with departed parents are absent as often, being, not infrequently, in danger of expulsion (Salvați Copiii, 2007: 51).

The study also highlights the fact that "both children and adults have a decrease in interest in school and homework, amid a lack of control by an adult with authority over them" (Salvați Copiii, 2007: 51) and "children and sometimes adolescents have difficulty completing homework and understanding the subject taught at school, feeling the need for help from an adult who can get involved in this activity / to provide assistance in the absence of parents" (Salvați Copiii, 2007: 52). Although there are no specific school policies and programs for this category, the research highlighted that their involvement in extracurricular activities had "a positive impact on children in terms of motivation to come to school" (Salvați Copiii, 2007: 52), which confirms the applicability and effectiveness of the participation-identification model, developed by Finn (1989). A doctoral research on the same topic reaches similar findings, some conclusions being worth mentioning: "Lack of physical presence of parents and implicitly low affectivity due to mobility, lack of a counselor, lead to conditions such as feeling abandoned, sadness, confusion, imbalance." (Cătărașu, 2018: 23). Therefore, "children are affected by the lack of parents, they associate their physical departure with fear, with feelings of loneliness, aspects that lead them to seek support in people who have the same situation as theirs." (Cătărașu, 2018: 23)

The proportions of the phenomenon in Romania are worrying. According to the data provided by the National Agency for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities / Agenția Națională pentru Drepturile Persoanelor cu Dizabilități (2020), in March 2020 in Romania lived 81274

children whose parents went to work abroad. Of these, 14519 children come from families where both parents have gone abroad, and 56458 from families where one parent has left. Official statistics also indicate that 1,0297 children come from single-parent families, in which the only parent is working abroad. The data provided by the Agency should be viewed with great caution, taking into account that they are based on secondary information processing of the registers of the Directorates-General for Social Assistance and Child Protection/ Direcțiilor Generale de Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului, which do not have the exhaustive situation of children left at home. Their number is expected to be much higher than the data presented above suggest, with important effects on absenteeism and dropout rates.

Another family problem specific to Romanian society more than others refers to the culture socialized in the family, which involves a certain attitude towards school. The attitude of the parents towards the school can be “the propellant towards the success and performance of the children or the main obstacle in the way of reaching them. It is a matter of choice, value orientation and, ultimately, the philosophy of life that parents assume and that they will pass on to future generations” (Velciu and Niculiță, 2012: 46). In Romania, although it is not wrong to talk about an unprecedented expansion of education in the second half of the last century, the school-family partnership is a recent principle, emerged simultaneously with the implementation of new pedagogical models and school policies. In the totalitarian regime, the school, as an institution of social control, was meant to ensure the training of the student in relation to the requirements of the “new man”, independent and sometimes in dissonance with the education offered in the family. For this reason, the complementarity of the two institutions, the delimitation of the social functions performed by each and the development of collaboration mechanisms for school success were notable post-December challenges, also specific to other former socialist states (Buden, 2010).

In addition to the factors related to the family of origin, absenteeism and school dropout are also based on factors that refer to the establishment of a new family, the most important being pregnancy and early marriage. Depending on the social affiliation, there are three subgroups within which these phenomena register an increased incidence, especially in Romania (UNICEF and SAMAS, 2019: 66). First, the situation is particularly common in traditional ethnic communities, such as some Roma communities, where the age of socially acceptable marriage is 10-16 years, which correlates with a generally hostile attitude towards school, which is not perceived as a significant agent of social success. The second category includes people from disadvantaged families, with a low level of education, who face absolute poverty or are on the verge of poverty, regardless of ethnicity. Finally, the third category considers marriages and “stochastic” tasks in the statistical distribution, few in number, which occur accidentally and do not take into account ethnicity, environment or level of education or income from the family of origin. Worryingly, “most minor mothers dropped out or drop out of school when they become mothers” (UNICEF and SAMAS, 2019: 4), despite school counseling and support programs for them. At the level of educational policy, Romania does not yet offer credible solutions for solving this social problem: “No educational measures are implemented for socially disadvantaged groups of adolescents and for those who dropped out of school, they are largely excluded from information activities and education, which increases the risk of inappropriate sexual behavior and unwanted pregnancies.” (UNICEF and SAMAS, 2019: 4). According to the National Institute of Statistics, no less than 19480 adolescents became mothers in 2018. The proportions of the phenomenon amplify the problem and make stringent the implementation of appropriate measures for these categories of students, for whom the risk of leaving school is higher, if not imminent.

### 3. School environment

School factors complement the explanatory table, giving more importance to the relationship between the student and the school environment. Specifically, psycho-pedagogical models focus on the ways in which performance and learning are achieved, the emphasis being placed not so much on the dynamics of the individual psyche, but on the student-teacher and student-community dyads. For this reason, pedagogical or, more precisely, psycho-pedagogical factors are assimilated to collective, "environmental" factors, which represent external predictors of school success or failure.

The debates about how the teacher should relate to the student and what should be the nature of this relationship are inexhaustible, bringing together a continuum of positions, from traditionalist to postmodernist. In the perspective of constructivist postmodern pedagogy, training is not the center of gravity of the teaching process, but the interaction between teacher and student, interaction focused on cognitive and applied purposes (Windschitl, 2002). Lately, the problem of the relationship between the constructivist principle of differentiated learning and the need for comparability of the performances obtained by students and the teaching units from which they come is becoming more and more frequent. The boundary between setting common standards and facilitating a space for the manifestation of creativity, interests and particular needs seems to be a difficult border to draw. The student is forced to comply with the requirements of the education cycle in which he is, and the "general competencies", as well as the "specific" ones, are often formulated in terms of general compulsory requirements. This hierarchical-functionalist organization of education, opposed to the vision of constructivists, encourages, according to the latter, absenteeism and school dropout: "The alternative of the student in a situation of school failure is his orientation towards special education or school dropout. Practices more recently validated in pedagogy, such as inclusive education, which supports the idea that students have equal opportunities in education and that it is necessary to make full use of the possibilities of all students, cannot be easily integrated into hierarchical educational systems." (Chiș, 2005: 43).

Poor skills of the teacher and the school environment in general to meet the specific needs of each student are an important factor in school failure. Intellectual psychological factors are poor predictors of school performance, indicating that for a large number of students, poor performance is mainly determined by non-intellectual factors, such as emotional insecurity, poor motivation, negative attitude towards school, poor self-control. or other unfavorable psycho-social circumstances (family or school). This means that the failure of the students in question can be avoided by practicing active and individualized pedagogical methods, through what Finn (1989) called participation-identification, in relation to the psychological profile that characterizes each student.

The personality of the actors in the educational environment (student and teacher) has a considerable importance in facilitating the participation and identification processes. In the learning activity, the student uses not only memory, thinking and attention, but also another psychic structure that integrates them, but not limited by them - personality. The emotional tone, activism and sociability specific to each temperamental type are of overwhelming importance in learning and in managing the teacher-student relationship. The balance of the sanguine and the phlegmatic predisposes to maintain a constant rhythm of the didactic activity, while the choleric student becomes very motivated at the beginning, but gives up very quickly. The phlegmatic seems to postpone everything, the melancholic seems distracted. The early manifestations of temperament change with the psycho-emotional maturation of the student, they begin to be controlled voluntarily, but the type of temperament does not change.

The extraversion-introversion dichotomy influences, in turn, the way in which students communicate both with each other, within the school group, and with their parents and teachers, respectively. Orientation to the outside (extraversion) or to the inner world (introversion), anxiety (against the background of increased neuroticism) or predisposition to

aggression or addiction and isolation are dimensions of personality that belong to temperament and have been studied by psychopedagogy. For example, the fact that extroverts work better than introverts in primary school and introverts better than extroverts at university level has been explained by the existence of specific factors that differentiate the primary school environment from the university one (Fontana, 1981). Constructivist pedagogical models favor extroverts, while individual work, specific to the university level and traditional education, favors introverts with priority.

Also, the study of the relationship between school performance and anxiety (or the dimension related to neuroticism) revealed that anxious students perform better in a calm and relaxed environment, while students with a low level of neuroticism are highly motivated. A more tense and competitive environment (Fontana, 1981). Anxious students must be supported by the teacher to face exaggerated and sometimes unjustified fears about school activities (irrational cognitions), and excessively "balanced" students must, in turn, be motivated, even by inducing a certain degree of anxiety. The non-adaptation of the school environment and the teacher to these requirements explains, to a certain extent, the source of school failure, with its ultimate form, respectively dropout, whose cause is often mentioned "disinterest", without being operationalized.

Another cause of school dropout, also of a school nature, refers to the perpetuation of inequalities in the school environment. The critical vision on education gained ground in the middle of the previous century, against the background of the social movements of ascension of some disadvantaged social categories until then. The central point of the conflictualist theories is the modification of the functioning regime of the school institutions. They no longer have the role of reproducing, but of producing values, they no longer preserve the relations of domination, but actively participate in social reform (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011). Thus, through emancipatory education, students learn to "think critically and develop a critical consciousness, which helps them to improve their living conditions and take the necessary measures to build a fairer and more equitable society" (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011: 1). Theorists of this current propose reorienting the school towards "teaching students to take risks, to teach them to challenge those in power, to honor critical traditions and to reflect on how authority is used in the classroom." (Giroux, 1997: 265)

#### **4. Conclusions**

The study of the determinants of school deviance followed the transition from neopositivist individualism to interpretive-phenomenological and, more recently, collectivist-institutionalist approaches. All these perspectives are not limited to theoretical speculations or assertions with nomological value. Depending on the theoretical position it adopts, the researcher analyzes differently the "responsible" factors for the deviant phenomena that appear in the school space. The first two perspectives, subsumed by the classical sociological and psychological approach, see in the individual and in the group experience the causal mechanisms related to these problems.

The third perspective, more recent and dominant at present, which continues the neoconflictualist criticism, emphasizes the social organization and, especially, the way the school space is structured and functions, respectively what elements of the social and educational macrostructure are based on the student's decision to leave school. Obviously, these elements may or may not be aware of the student, which is why the sociological survey based on a questionnaire, although useful, is not sufficient to elucidate family and school factors during primary socialization that encourage absenteeism and dropout. Although not yet imposed by its own methodological apparatus, this approach offers both impressive empirical research from the perspective of the data corpus used and the innovative nature of the conclusions (Lee and Burkam, 2001), as well as theoretical analyzes designed to order and

explain how the family, in the first years of life, but also the school, through curriculum, structure, regulation and psychosocial climate, can influence school deviance (Riehl, 1999).

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE LEVEL OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS

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**Abstract:** *People, from birth to old age, need each other to have a healthy lifestyle, to develop and to reach their full potential. This developmental process materializes following the influence of an important factor: socialization. Adolescence is a period of transition from the infantile, immature, and disorganized person to the one with an organized and complex thinking, when the young person forms his own identity, independent of the family, with a significant role in the development of the adult. This period is the most difficult, enhanced by both internal and external conflicts, emotional instability and increased lability of emotions, frequently moving from one state to another.*

**Key words:** relationship; networking; socializing; anxiety; depression; teens

### 1. The period of adolescence

Adolescence is perceived as an existential but natural crisis, present due to the multitude of psycho-hormonal changes, when the previous adaptive structures are outdated, far from the new organization, and the defense mechanisms can no longer bend to the new requirements, both from the external environment, as well as from the internal one. This disorganization can be part of both thinking and the motivational or affective side, a starting point for anxiety or depressive disorders.

During this period, there are major changes in the social plan, as a result of which adolescents tend to spend much more time with the elderly than in previous stages, looking for new people to attach, and time spent with family, especially parents, decreases considerably.

Social relations develop in the area of people outside the family environment, especially with people of the opposite sex, of the same generation, which are based on intimacy, trust, respect for their own needs and trying to get as close as possible. Consequently, the capacity for emotional autonomy acquires new valences, being much more flexible, as well as the decisional one, with both negative and positive impact on the future adult. It also increases the potential for emotional reactivity (Adams and Berzonsky, 2009), bringing with it new skills in understanding emotions. Adolescents perceive the world through the prism of their own reasoning, both empirical and scientific. They can engage in relationships based strictly on emotional feelings, and the flexibility of emotions can be due to the biological level, hormonal fluctuations.

Sociability is manifested by the need for affiliation (Sîntion, 2018), an interactive process of identification with someone else, through reciprocity, contributing to the social recognition of that person. The need for affiliation, during adolescence, acquires a colossal significance, being one of the main priorities of the

young person, which develops after joining a group, regardless of its category, in order (Șintion, 2018) to receive positive stimulation, to exchange various opinions or personal experiences, to clarify cases of uncertainty or for socio-affective support from the partner in key situations.

Grațîela Sion (2007) thinks that the transition from childhood to adulthood has as a point of support a longer break, focused on adolescence, a period described as: disturbed, tense and marked by certain crucial events in the life of the uninitiated young man. One of the major tasks of the adolescent is to create and maintain meaningful social relationships, and childhood friendships turn into increasingly intimate relationships. Another duty refers to the development of identity relationships and their management in interaction with loved ones. The method that facilitates this process is self-disclosure, an exchange of thoughts, feelings, behaviors.

## **2. The relationship between adolescents and social networks**

Man has always had the need to communicate with others, to know, to obtain information and to pass it on to others, in writing or orally. Currently, there is no dimension of life that is deprived of the transformation generated by technological innovation and the multiple possibilities of manipulating information.

In the last two decades, reducing the time it takes to send messages and information has become one of the biggest challenges facing today's society. Social networks, as a means of communication, refer to all communication structures found in the Internet and characterize a means of multimedia transmission of ideas, thoughts, feelings.

Castellano (2002) believes that media interaction gives rise to both the advantage and the disadvantage of creating new movements of opinion, promoting socio-cultural manifestations, creating support groups for social causes or a new fashion of human behavior.

Social networks are promoted through expectations, stimulating information, but also through some cognitive restrictions, which lead to the deep interest of users.

In the opinion of Castellano (2002), the media network is meant to offer an illusion of company, without the demands of physical friendship. This provides the opportunity to create superfluous, frequent, but shallow relationships in which emotional behavior is masked and reduced to an emoticon.

In his studies, he claimed that one in six young people will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetime, and four out of five social networking platforms produce feelings of anxiety, mental insecurity. This disorder can have a substantial negative impact on the development of adolescents, manifested by feelings of overwhelming worry, difficulty leaving home, communicating, attending classes or having a job.

Research (Hew, 2011: 662-676) has shown that adolescents who spend more than 3 hours a day on social networking sites are more likely to report poor mental health, including psychological stress (a specific symptom of anxiety and depression). Following photos posted on the social networking platform and the negative evaluation or under the expectations of teenagers, which gives certain users feelings of inequality and social inferiority. Unrealistic expectations (Becker, Alzahabi and Hopwood, 2013) on online opinions can reduce self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, disappointment, lack of appreciation, and dissatisfaction with the mind-body

relationship and lead. to the obsession with perfectionism, manifested in the form of anxiety or depressive disorders (obsessive-compulsive disorder).

Anxiety, caused by social networks, can be characterized by: interruption of face-to-face conversations to check social accounts, trying to reduce the time spent on such networks - but without success, neglect of duties at work or school, decreased appetite, metabolic disorders, but also vision problems decreased sexual activity, excessive agitation when the adolescent can not connect to such networks.

Statistics claim (Marhan, Popa, 2012: 73-92) that 40% of users of social media accounts on Facebook are young and very young.

Given this transitional period, they are more prone to the manifestation of anxious and depressive behaviors, being easily influenced by external factors, including social networks, which adolescents use quite frequently, such as (<https://socialmedialist.org/social-networks.html>): Facebook, which has about 2 billion monthly users; WhatsApp with about 1 billion users; LinkedIn with about 500 million users; Google+, which has about 150 million users; Twitter with about 320 million users or Instagram, a social network for accessing photos and videos, which has about 800 million users.

Although social networks have become an essential means of communication, their overuse can lead to a series of negative consequences in terms of emotional or social development of adolescents. Thus, the adolescent isolates himself in front of the phone, tablet or computer, resorting to a written communication to the detriment of the oral one, which implies a more intimate contact with the interlocutor, which requires more time. The activities on these platforms are much more captivating, and young people become detached from any other activity that deprives them of access to the Internet. Teenagers give up going out with friends or family to immerse themselves in the still undiscovered secrets of the online.

Knox, Daniela, Sturdivant and Zusman (2001) found, based on a study conducted in the USA, that 83.3% of men and 63.3% of women surveyed answered that they use internet social networks to initiate certain relationships, some temporary, some more lasting, friendly or intimate. A significant proportion of study participants stated that they use this path to reduce anxiety or fear of social rejection, but this condition is exacerbated the longer the time spent on such networks. They (Knox, Daniela, Sturdivant and Zusman, 2001) showed that the more shy a person is, the more dependent on the internet and the virtual people they come in contact with, the more accentuated they are, opting for refuge behind the screen, under anonymity or a false identity.

One of the reasons why teenagers, in particular, choose to take refuge in such an environment is the fear of not being rejected in the face of face-to-face interaction, but later become unable to develop their favorite interaction skills by establishing direct contacts, thus voluntarily avoiding them.

According to researchers (Cooper, Sportolari, 1997. 7-14), the average duration of relationships established in the online environment is about two years, after which certain differences begin to be observed. They (Cooper, Sportolari, 1997: 7-14) argue that among adolescents, females are much more confessional than males, regardless of the gender to which they are confessed.

### 3. Objectives

1. Identify the differences in the gender of the subjects and their anxiety level.
2. Identifying differences in the gender of subjects and their level of depression.
3. Identifying the differences in terms of time spent on social networks by subjects and their level of anxiety.
4. Identifying the differences in terms of time spent on social networks by subjects and their level of depression.

### 4. Hypotheses

1. It is assumed that there is a difference between gender and the level of anxiety in adolescents,
2. It is assumed that there is a difference between gender and the level of depression in adolescents
3. It is assumed that there is a difference between time spent on social networks and the level of anxiety in adolescents
4. It is assumed that there is a difference between the time spent on social networks and the level of depression in adolescents,

### 5. Sample

To conduct the study, a sample of 60 subjects was used, divided into 30 female subjects, 30 male subjects, of which 30 who spend less than 6 hours on social networking sites and 30 who spend more than 6 hours on social media sites. these sites. They were selected from the Theoretical High School "Carol I" Fetești, both in urban and rural areas.

### 6. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1- It is assumed that there is a difference between gender and the level of anxiety in adolescents.

Table 1. Testul Mann-Whitney

	anxietate
Mann-Whitney U	8,000
Wilcoxon W	473,000
Z	-6,537
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000

According to Table 1, the hypothesis is confirmed because the significance threshold is less than 0.05.

The development of gender identity, during adolescence, is an essential variable in shaping the adult of the future, due to the fact that the activities, habits, professional functions or moral principles to which the individual adheres are prescribed by gender stereotypes. Gender differentiation increases in significance because certain characteristics promoted for men and women, respectively, are capitalized differently.

Echeburia (2010) described males as more independent and performance-oriented. Thus, men are more detached from the results of the contacts they establish, less emotionally involved, and the explanations of failed activities come from outside, assumed by others, not by the results of their own actions. They are oriented towards professional life, having few but qualitative contacts, they emphasize more on direct communication, without too many sentimental implications, which determines them to be more confident, more optimistic unlike women.

Femininity is frequently associated with tolerance and sensitivity multiple social relationships that have an impact on daily life. Thus, having more friends is very difficult to have qualitative social relationships, which means investing the same amount of time and feelings with each other.

Another cause for the installation of anxiety in adolescents may have as a starting point cyberbullying, a phenomenon by which the harasser, in the real world, expresses himself through insults, humiliation, threats or blackmail, through the Internet, on whose platform publishes information, photos or videos with harmful and infamous content, which feature more female characters than male characters, much more exposed. Following this process, the protagonist girls are given desolate labels, which lead to rejection in the group of friends, abandonment of activities with others (to avoid malicious comments), giving up the search for new people to interact. The victim's self-esteem decreases, hatred and frustration occur, fear and the feeling of helplessness or stress appear, a mediating opportunity for the installation of anxiety.

Echeburia (2010: 91-96) explains that the motivation to use a smartphone, both women and men is multiple: to be visible to others, to assert one's identity in the group and to be connected with friends, but when in which this barrier transcends to intimate life, there tends to be some fear of not being subjectively interpreted in personal life information.

Hypothesis 2 - It is assumed that there is a difference between gender and the level of depression in adolescents

**Table 2. Mann-Whitney**

	depression
Mann-Whitney U	66,000
Wilcoxon W	531,000
Z	-5,678
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000

According to Table 2, the hypothesis is confirmed because the significance threshold is less than 0.05 (sig.0 = 0.00) Gender differences, in terms of depression in adolescents, are usually reported following the analysis of individual variables. Signs and depression are present in both men and women, but their manifestation in the latter is more common than in men. During periods of depression, they tend to blame themselves, feel sad, apathetic, and develop poor or emotionally affected social contacts.

Adolescents are more prone to depression because they have increased emotional lability, both in terms of hormonal changes during this period and because

of the emotional ones, specific to this age, such as the appearance of sex differences. Girls mature prematurely compared to boys, both physically and emotionally. During this period, conflicting relationships with parents increase, and in the case of attachment there is a rupture that is difficult to repair. Many parents find it difficult to accept their change and the tendency to create their own identity. Parents try to maintain their authority over the imposition of rules.

They often have episodes of crying for the release of emotional tension, followed by outbursts of anger, episodes of inconsistency in feelings, which mainly affects contacts with relatives.

Following internet browsing, one can find topics such as eating problems (anorexia and bulimia), some of the most noticeable sources of affecting the psychological integrity of teenage girls, because at this age there is a concern for physical image. In this regard, women become concerned with finding various remedies that work more or less. Comparing themselves to people who are much weaker, more beautiful than them, they feel dissatisfied and eventually resort to social isolation, interrupt supportive contacts and make room for the early onset of depression.

Even when expressing their opinions (Weiss, 1973) adolescents may feel that they are not taken seriously, that they do not have sustainable arguments or that the conversation partner does not respect their opinions and thoughts. Lack of trust and support from the interlocutor affects self-confidence. Gender stereotyping also occurs, and when a girl relates, appreciates or promotes activities classified as specific to boys, she is rejected by other girls because the way she adheres to various habits and practices with is fully accepted by the group.

Hypothesis 3 - It is assumed that there is a difference between the time spent on social networks and the level of anxiety in adolescents.

**Table 3. Mann-Whitney**

	anxietate
Mann-Whitney U	284,500
Wilcoxon W	845,500
Z	-2,393
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,017

According to Table 3, the hypothesis is confirmed because the threshold of significance is less than 0.05 (sig. = 0.017) Interpersonal relationships (Șintion, 2018) may exist in a temporal framework: a past enters a relationship), the present and an imagined future (the expectations that the partner has from that relationship, the desires, the needs he wants to satisfy). Relationships between individuals involve mutual trust, and each of the partners instills in the other emotional states, information, expectations. The adolescent can get very deeply involved, from an emotional point of view, in a relationship born on a social network by spending a lot of time conversing with that person, and as a result he ignores his friends from reality. When the physical encounter occurs, the adolescent is disappointed. The person you

know on the social network does not match the pattern they displayed in the conversations.

According to the three-stage theory (Șintion, 2018), which can be applied even online, three fundamental steps in establishing interpersonal relationships have been highlighted. The first stage involves the perception and valorization of potential partners. In social relations, partners are chosen according to geographical area, age, musical preferences, civic principles or, in most cases, online social relations, according to the number of common virtual friends. The second stage involves choosing the interaction partner, ie the initial attraction, depending on the criteria presented above, what we know about that person, what satisfaction it can bring us and how to end that relationship. The last stage involves the functioning of the relationship through evolution or dissolution. Adolescents may find that the image of the person they have come in contact with is distorted, and the relationship becomes deadlocked and dissolves. This has repercussions on the mental life of the disillusioned partner, who has invested time, who has had expectations and who has made deep confessions to get closer to the seemingly right partner. Following repeated experiences derived from relational failures, spent on social networking sites, attachment anxiety occurs.

Adolescents who have been deprived of the necessary gratifications show the insecurity of complying with the expectations of others, distrust of their own strength, reaching the diffuse fear of interaction with other people, emotional and physical loneliness. Marshall, (2012) argues that one of the consequences relates to decreased social skills. The adolescent reaches a phase in which it is difficult for him to reveal himself, he fails to introduce himself, to have a conversation, becoming the favorite target of repeated ironies. Very few of them realize the socio-emotional influence of these social networks, and most of the time self-blame appears.

In other words, young people feel wronged by the fact that, as a result of situations, problems or emotional deficiencies, unmasked on social networking sites, they do not receive the expected emotional support, are judged and receive certain labels that lead to social ostracism. Social anxiety has been shown to be quantitatively and qualitatively linked to negative social feedback, poor interpersonal relationships (albeit in large numbers, but qualitatively worthless), perfectionism (as a defining trait for the adolescent who compares to others but cannot be obtained in reality) and by the increased presentation of the qualities considered essential in attracting the interaction partner.

Adolescents often use these networks to release their suppressed emotions during the day, being a much more comfortable expression mechanism, through which they can express their grievances related to family, friends, schoolmates, without having direct contact with stressful stimulus. In the perception of others, on social networks, there is the error of confirmation (Trope and Liberman, 1996) by which the adolescent tends to interpret events (for example: an appreciation or a comment on a post) in a way that disillusionment occurs. Contemporary adolescents no longer experience certain situations through their own experiences. Thus, instead of a trip to the mountains and an hour of skiing, he prefers to watch a video posted on a social network, in which a virtual friend practices a winter sport. The adolescent cultivates individualism, and the emphasis no longer falls on the spirit of the community, which becomes lonely, detached.

On the other hand, several studies have shown an association between the level of anxiety and different behavioral patterns of individuals in the social environment of the Internet (Moody, 2001: 80-110; Marhan and Popa, 2012: 73-92, Madariaga, 2010) The use of boarding for unrelated purposes with the transmission of important, urgent messages, they can lead to anxiety. This is supported by the fact that young people hide their problems behind a screen, they become more amplified and become more difficult to solve. Adolescents become addicted to the people they interact with, giving up real-life customs so as not to lose the person's attachment to the online environment. The gradual decrease in interaction is seen as abandonment. Having and using multiple accounts on social networks simultaneously has become a common thing among young people, being positively correlated with anxiety. They can be victims of a continuous social pressure to support their online identity, carefully analyzed from several perspectives: popularity (number of appreciations, number of friends), cultural level (kind of music, motivational quotes distributed on the profile), level material (places where users share their location).

Hypothesis 4 - It is assumed that there is a difference between time spent on social networks and the level of depression in adolescents.

Table 4. Test T, Levene

		Levene's Test		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error
		F	Sig.					
depression	Equal variances assumed	8,253	,006	5,540	58	,000	49,963	9,018
	Equal variances not assumed			5,709	57,454	,000	49,963	8,752

According to Table 4, the hypothesis is confirmed because the significance threshold is less than 0.05 (sig. = 0.00). By using social media recipes, access to inappropriate content posted by other users is allowed and facilitated. The teenager in question can interact with such people by making contact with various images, videos with both sexual overtones and scenes of violence, as a result of which psychological health may suffer.

In other words, they can publish their emotional status ("in a relationship with Y" or "engaged to X" seeking the approval of significant others or marking territory ("this boy is no longer available to other girls") In today's society there are young people willing to make public their identities, tastes, experiences and opinions on various topics in virtual conversations. A longitudinal study of high school students in Western Australia found a strong correlation between the time they spent on social networking sites and depression (Lenhart and Duggan, 2014)

Gaudix (2014) observed behavioral dissociations between social media users and non-users. Excessive use of Facebook has been associated with trends in self-harm

(depressive practice). For the research, the adolescents were arranged in 2 samples, the first had unlimited access to social networks, and the second had restricted access to only 10 minutes. After 3 weeks, when a questionnaire measuring the level of anxiety and depression was administered, the sample that had unlimited time for social media had a higher level than the members of the other sample. After imposing the same rules and the first sample, they were left with only mild symptoms.

A study by professors at the University of Pennsylvania (Whitty, 2008: 1707-1723) showed that spending a long time on social networks increases the level of depression in users. This study focused on 504 high school subjects using a scale that tested social media addiction, and most of the positive responses showed that adolescents used to compare themselves with others of their age, who had a better financial situation, went better. often during the holidays, and their posts had a greater impact, more appreciation and favorable comments. Subjects tended to post as many photos as possible with them and were bothered by tagging in posts that did not attract the attention of others. In adolescents, FOMO syndrome develops, namely the fear of being left out of solid groups with certain social requirements. The authors conclude that, in addition to the beneficial impact that certain media have, the only one who can set boundaries between the two worlds is the individual.

## **7. Conclusions**

Smartphones with multiple functions and internet access have become an irreplaceable mechanism in everyday life, among young people who use them constantly to initiate from phone calls to exchanges of messages and multimedia content. Adolescents use such mechanisms to maintain a close link between real and online life. In the interaction mediated by social networks, different situations generate different behaviors. Thus, women are more likely to show depressive and anxious symptoms than men. They may show emotional lability related to how the interaction, positive or negative, the conversation partner or the meaning of the messages occurs. On social networks, a message can have both objective and subjective meanings, depending on the previous experience of the receiver.

Within the social connections that arise in the Internet, each situation to which the adolescent is exposed can have negative and positive values, having in the foreground how it allows to be affected by that situation, the human being having a hypercomplex behavior. and chameleon. In the online space, it can be modified, changed, sometimes radically transformed and can have a negative imprint on the further development of the future adult. Young people who spend more time on social networks have a more developed level of depression and anxiety Depression and anxiety have as a way of manifesting the way teenagers, more depressed than men, or people who spend more time on dating sites. socializing exposes their thoughts, emotions, feelings.

Teenagers are very open on social media networks, leaving aside inhibitions. Depressed young people tend to post on such channels or interact through these environments to the detriment of face-to-face communication.

Online communication is devoid of real, authentic emotions. Emoticons or writing or describing a condition is far from emotionally equal to the facial gesture or expression that accompanies it. Virtual communication has as a starting point more the

transmission of one's own feelings to the detriment of balancing the needs of others, being done only when the adolescent is connected to a device that allows this.

Online social networks have a great impact on the future development of the adolescent, but also on the present in which he lives and manifests himself.

The Internet and virtual proximity, drawn through social networks, lead to the loss of the direct character of interpersonal relationships and the development of technology-mediated, and behind the screen the individual wears a mask (Ceobanu, 2016), which reveals itself as much as it considers enough to meet the expectations or desires of others. Physical proximity loses ground to the detriment of the virtual one, which shelters an infinite space, with an unlimited number of accessible people to enter into an interpersonal relationship of any kind. The virtual environment facilitates the psychological approach, but its quality is weaker than the physical one, which requires more time, but is stronger and more authentic.

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## THE ROLE OF GRAZING ON LANDSCAPE DEGRADATION IN THE SABGA-BAMUNKA AREA, CAMEROON

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**Abstract:** *The Sabga-Bamunka Area is a vivid example of areas in Sub-Saharan Africa where grazing has resulted in conspicuous landscape deterioration. Landscape degradation is quite visible over the globe but the manifestations of degradation on rangelands remains complex and varied from one place to another. This study is therefore carried out to assess the effects of grazing activities on the landscape of the Bamunka-Sabga Area. The methodology that has been adopted in this research is both deductive and inductive. The data used have been obtained from primary sources through field measurements, observations, photographs, and administration of questionnaire, focus group discussions and interviews. The study also made use of topographic map, satellite images, Landsat ETM of study Area. Data was then treated with the use of GIS and Computer Assisted Cartographic soft wares such as QUANTUM GIS, ArcGIS, and ADOBE illustrator. The processed data were then presented in the form of; tables, graphs, histograms and synoptic charts as well as maps. The study reveals that cattle's rearing is the main triggering force of the landscape degradation processes. This has been seen through the numerous erosional forms, reduction in vegetal cover, and recurrent/ incessant mass-movements. It was equally clearly deduced that the carrying capacity of the area is overstretched resulting in overgrazing, as a result of increasing numbers of herds that graze on the commons. The quest of the growing population to obtain a living as well as improving on the economy of the area has overtaken the environmental resources. The solutions proposed involve strategies to prevent and control landscape degradation. These solutions are sustainable and fall within the ability of the local inhabitants and the economic context of our nation. There is thus the need for concrete environmental management plans that can meet the taste of time in the short, medium and long term for present day Sabga-Bamunka area.*

**Key words:** cattle rearing; overgrazing; landscape degradation; farmer-grazier conflict; sustainable management.

### 1. Introduction

Grazing land is a vital resource to mankind and cattle's rearing has become an emerging activity in recent years and this has sustained the livelihood of pastoralists in different parts of the world. Grazing lands are of great importance for the quality of life on earth, they provide various goods and services, such as food and fibre, carbon sequestration, genetic diversity, recreational areas, and heritage values. Since the domestication of major livestock species some 10,000 years ago, grazing has been the main practice for livestock feeding in most parts

of the world. As opposed to modern intensive farming, where feed is presented to animals in pens or feedlots. Grazing as a practice has an enormous effect on the spatial structure (Henkin et al., 2007) and hence on ecosystem function, in terms of biodiversity, wildlife habitats (Lunt, 2005), and micro-climate (Yates et al., 2000). In recent decades, livestock production based on grazing has decreased in many regions of the world (Bouwman et al., 2005). This trend has strongly affected many of the grazing land ecosystems, causing profound changes.

In Cameroon, grazing land is important to subsistence pastoralists, foragers and farmers who are dependent on rain fed crop. Grazing land refers to expansive most unimproved land on which a significant proportion of natural vegetation is native grass, forbs and shrubs. The main effect of grazing on the landscape of Sabga-Bamunka is expressed through changes in vegetation pattern and composition. The nature and extent of these changes depend on livestock species (Rook et al., 2004), grazing history (Perevolotsky and Seligman, 1998), vegetation formation and grazing intensity (Coffin et al., 1998), as well as on a-biotic variables such as soil type and precipitation. Global processes such as climate change also play a major role in determining successional trends (Mouillot et al., 2002).

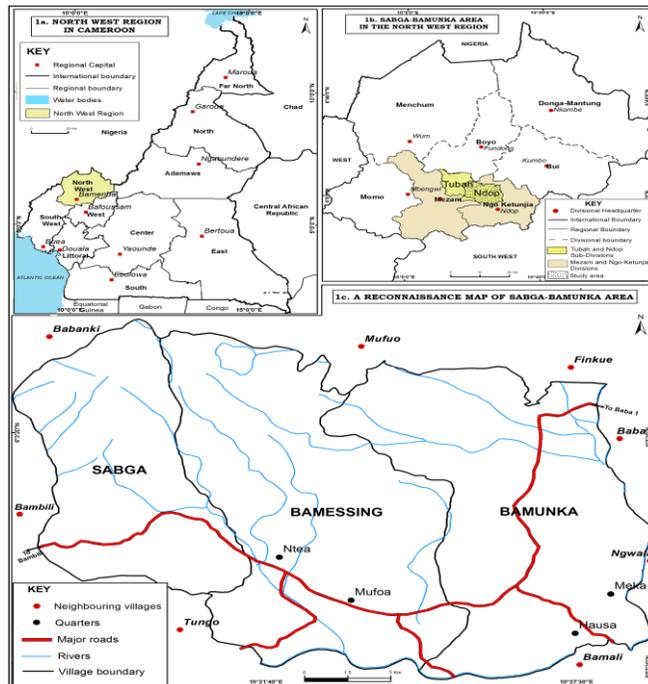
Grazing land has been a call for concern for most authors especially with reference to over grazing and grazing land degradation. In Africa, increase pressure leads to a decline in the productivity of pastures for cattle, sheep, and goat as well as wild herbivores. Authors on these opinions of degradation include Walker, (1995), Adam and Blench, (1998). They noted that heavy grazing changes the composition of the vegetation in case of persistence. Kelt, (1995), applied determinism and possibilism approach to examine the consequences of overgrazing and noted the abusive exploitation of pastures, its existence and availability to support cattle at a given pastoral territory. The recurrent expansion of cultivated land into grazing area of Sabga-Bamunka area, increased in the number of cattle has led to pasture shortage thus accelerating grazing land loss and degradation and handicapping sustainable management of grazing land. The aim of this article is to examined the role of grazing on the landscape degradation of the Sabga- Bamunka area.

## **2. Material and method**

The Sabga-Bamunka area (figure 1) is located between latitude 6°00' and 6°6' North of the equator and between longitudes 10°18' and 10°24' East of the Greenwich meridian. This area is found in the North West Region of Cameroon. The area is bordered in the North by the Oku massif, to the west by Mbengwi, to the east by Ngoketunjia and South by Mezam. The area is inhabited by a population of about 62,000 people, and it is crossed by many streams and surrounded by hills which account for the rearing of livestock in this area.

The basic materials and method used in this study involved the interpretation of topographic sheet of Bafoussam 1:50000. Satellite images with specific reference to spot, Landsat, google earth provided much information that served as base data. This was followed by field observations and the analyses of questionnaires on such core elements. Data collected during field work was analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS), chi square. The principal software used in treating the satellite images were ERDAS IMAGINE 2014 and ARCGIS 10.2.1. The satellite images were classified using Multi Spec Version 5.01 from which, four cover classes were identified (forest, shrub/grassland, farmland and settlement). A sample size of 200 pastoralists was selected and questionnaires were administered. This was according to the spatial representation of the various grazing land areas within the study area and proportionate number of graziers. Considering the changes that occurred on grazing land, 200 respondents were determined proportionately. Two villages were covered with spectacular focus on pastoralists especially cattle owners to better assess the elements of grazing land dynamics. For instance,  $200/500 \times 100 = 40$

**Figure 2: Location Map of Study Area**



Source: Extract of Cameroon Administrative Map/ NIC 2010

### 3. Findings and discussion

Livestock production is the foundation of livelihood in the Sabga- Bamunka area with cattle being the most valued animal species. The possession of cattle constitutes an integral part of the social, economic and ritual life style for the people. An individual without cattle may not be qualified to fulfil the requirements of certain social standard or to execute certain social obligation (Tache & Sjaastard, 2010). The production system in this community is under increasing pressure from various stressors which include degradation and shrinking of rangeland, insecure communal land right and human population increases, changes in vegetation cover and land use, invasion of undesired species and conflicts. These are grazing land dynamics area in the Sabga-Bamunka area but notwithstanding adaptation strategies has been put in place by pastoralists as well as recommendation proposed and if it is well implemented then sustainable development on grazing area or rangeland will be achieved. These grazing land dynamics includes:

#### 3.1. Farmer – Grazier Conflict or Grazing Land Resource Use Conflict

In the Northwest Region in general and Sabga- Bamunka area in particular grazing lands are characterised by a wide range of phenomena and activities that lead to conflicts and ecological changes. Human intervention through farming and grazing naturally brings about dynamics and conflicts. Farmer-grazier conflict is a common phenomenon in the Sabga-Bamunka area. The conflict results from the rapid rate at which grazing areas are changing or degrading. Climate change and increasing in human and animal population have aggravated the pressure. Conflict is often manifested through open violent and ethnic bias because of differences in lifestyle between two communities. Such differences provoked competition over available declining natural resources for grazing, settlement, and farming (Table 1)

**Table 1: Perception on causes and reasons for persistence farmer-grazier conflict in Sabga- Bamunka area**

Reasons and causes of farmer- grazier conflicts	Respondents	% of respondents
Increase of crop damage and trace passing into agricultural land	100	51%
Encroachment into grazing land and blocking of transhumance route by farmer	60	31%
Inability of the administration and traditional leader to solve farmer-grazier conflicts (corrupt practices)	36	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field work 2018

From the table above the most important causes and reasons for the persistent farmer-grazier conflicts is the continuous crop damage and trace passing into agricultural land (with 51%). This is followed by blocking of transhumance route (with 31%). Finally we have the inability to solve farmer-grazier conflicts (with 18%) and then corrupt practices. Also, the complicated nature of the conflicts such as conflict over access to water sources, bush fire related conflicts and conflict over the destruction of property were identified as minor causes of farmer-grazier conflicts during field work.

Furthermore, Farmer-grazier conflict in the area often result in open violence and manifested in different ways such as wounding and poisoning of animal by farmer, the chasing of farmers by herdsmen with knives and walking stick used in driving cattle and cutlass.

Moreover, herdsmen are often said to have destroyed fences intentionally for their cattle to feed on crop cultivated by native farmers and use money to bribe corrupt civil servants and traditional leaders to favour them against native farmers. Such violent attitudes have made the Fulani and their host native neighbours to live at logger head with each party not willing to see the other at any time in their neighbouring communities (Table 2).

**Table 2: Report on Farmer- Grazier Conflict in the Sabga- Bamunka Area**

Village	Nº of cases registered	Cases judge by agro-pastoral commission	Nº of cases send to court and judge	Nº pending	Cases withdrawn and solved amicable
Sabga	50	9	10	20	10
Bamunka	18	20	04	48	7
Total	68	29	14	68	17

Source: Field work data, 2016 and adapted from MINEPIA in Ndop-Sabga area.

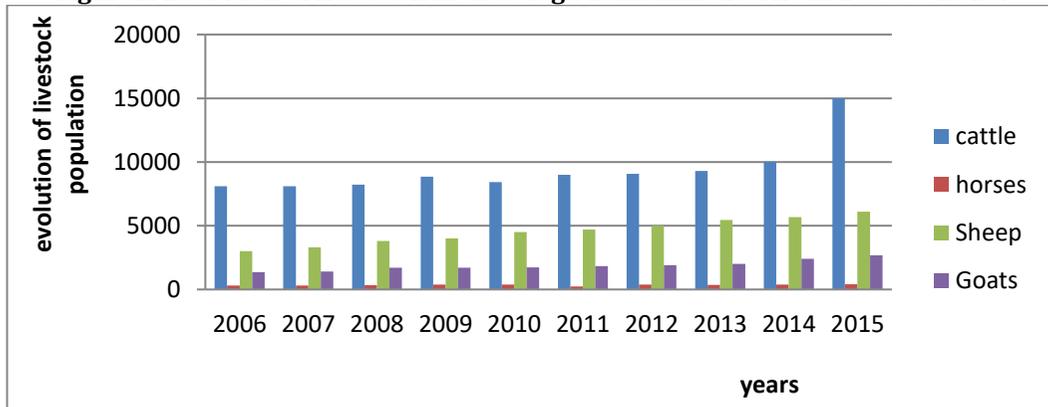
According to the result on the table, the general tendency of farmer-grazier conflict in the study area is higher (29) with varying intensity due to the number of cases solved by agro-pastoral commission. The many (68) pending cases are due to death of one party, peaceful reconciliation or some of them are discouraged and have decided to abandon the issue. In the case where both parties are discouraged, the conflict becomes more violent as a means of avenging the damage done either by the grazier or farmer through crop destruction and they always retaliate through wounding, poisoning and killing of cattle as seen in plate3 above. Farmer-grazier conflict has really contributed to poverty and misery in the study area. This is because the cost of such conflicts is often bear by both parties in the community and this cost is money that would have been used for development projects. Farmer-grazier conflict has

resulted to reduction in livestock in the area since farmers killed cattle using salt because these cattle destroyed their crops. This conflict is one of the major problem in the study area.

**3.2. Over grazing, pasture degradation and variation of carrying capacity**

Grazing areas are shrinking at an increasing rate and the remaining part support increasing livestock rate without pasture improvement. Overgrazing and under grazing are evident in the result of pasture degradation with changes in vegetation cover quantitatively in term of biomass and qualitatively in term of replacement of high value grass species by unpalatable species and thorny shrub. Grazing areas are changing due to increasing competitive land use. Livestock number has increased tremendously over the past (Fig5). This is because of veterinary services that treat most of the diseases affecting livestock. The competition over land is reducing grazing land. The repercussions are that the increasing numbers of cattle stocked on a reduced space will weigh on the carrying capacity. All of this, because grazing is still dependent on what nature provides and little effort is made in pasture improvement and as such pastures are deteriorated when over harvested. Overgrazing is detrimental because it reduces primary productivity, impedes growth and survival and alters species composition of the grasses.

**Figure2: Evolution of livestock in the Sabga-Bamunka area from 2006 to 2015.**



Source : field work data, 2018

From the figure, the result reveals that as time goes on, cattle increases more than any other livestock. The number has increased from 8102 heads in 2006 to 15000 heads in 2015. Sheep is the second with number that evolved from 3000 in 2006 to 6101 in 2015. Goats have also increased from 1370 in 2006 to 2671 in 2015. Meanwhile, horses from 300 to 400 heads in 2015.

Shrub and forbs that provide animal with food and cover heavy grazing tends to cause palatable species to decline and the subsequent dominance by other less palatable, herbaceous plants and bushes. Grazing land loss increases the stocking rate and therefore results in overgrazing. Grazing land can be used to manage grassland habitats but overgrazing that leave little vegetative cover is detrimental to biodiversity. Due to increasing pressure, domestic livestock grazing has a long term impact on native plants community. Many plant areas have experienced a shift in plant species composition due to persistent heavy grazing that leave little ability for desirable perennial plants to reproduce thus, resulting in loss of favoured plant species (Adams, 1996). During field observation, the major problem noted was the high stocking rate. Despite the loss of grazing area to other competing land use, pastoralists have stocked to their old age cattle complex.

For instance, *Hyperrhenia* is fire climax community and *Sporobolus* is graze fire climax community. So it is seen that original climax grassland was dominated by *Hyperrhenia* due to fire. The introduction of cattle came to add on the impact of fire and permitted the proliferation of *Sporobolus*. Therefore, there is a shift from *Hyperrhenia* to *Sporobolus*. Hawkins and Brunt, (1965) also carried out transect measured on *Hyperrhenia* and *Sporobolus*. The study was undertaken firstly, on the *Hyparrhenia* where a transect was measured on an area that has not been burnt or grazed for some year, and secondly on *Sporobolus* (grazed fire climax) where a transect was taken along the Bambui-Oku road, near fences erected to protect farmland from interference by cattle, inside which transect were measured (Table 3).

**Table 3: Transect measurements of grasslands**

Types of grassland transect		<i>Hyparrhenia</i> species grassland below 1600m	<i>Sporobolus</i> above 1600m
Date of transect		30.7.62	19.06.1962
Location and burning and grazing history		Lava plateau above Babanki	
Altitude (m)		1550m	2120m
Grass cover of main species as percentage of vegetal cover		<i>Hyparrhenia</i> 63.3 <i>Sporobolus</i> 5.8 mosses and liverwort 15.9 Trifolium 1.7	<i>Sporobolu</i> sp, 92.1 Digitaire sp Melinis sp} 00.7 Trifolium 02.6
Percentage ground occupied by	vegetation	36.7	34.7
	Bare earth	63.3	65.3

Source : Hawkins and Brunts, 1965.

The result from the table reveals that all the types of grassland (burnt or not) are not 100% protected by vegetal cover. Higher altitudes that are frequently affected by bush fire, the percentage of bare soil are relatively lower. This indicates that the degree of ground coverage reduces with distance downhill with *Hyparrhenia*. Considering the steep slope that characterized the higher altitude of this area, the *Hyparrhenia* grassland species is severely eroded by surface runoff water. Transect experiment of this nature were also conducted on eight other sites bringing the number up to ten on the high lava plateau. Thus, an overall average percentage of ground cover was also computed as shown on Table 4.

**Table 4: Vegetation covers of the grasslands around 1600m altitude as a percentage of ground surfaces (average)**

Nature of the surface	<i>Hyparrhenia</i>	<i>Sporobolus</i>
	Grassland (m)	Grassland(m)
Total vegetal cover grass, hedges, herbs, creepers, mosses	37.2	40.1
Bare earth	62.8	59.9
Total	100	100

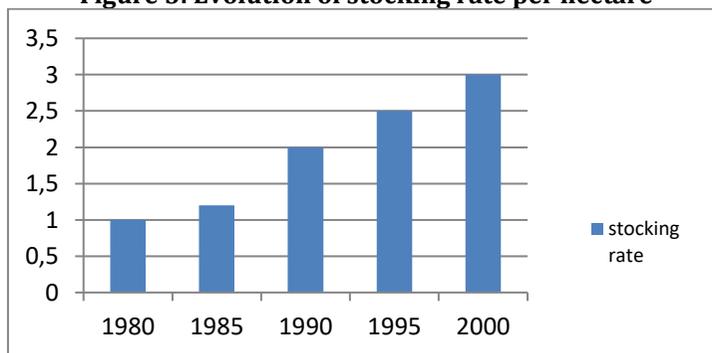
Source: Hawkins and Brunts, 1965.

As indicated by the above table, the tendency already noted in preceding table 4 is reconfirmed. Thus, it is crystal clear from averages that, the grassland savanna of high lava plateau generally has vegetation covers that protect the surface at about 50%. This degree of ground cover can be classified as merely 'fair' following the classification figure and

consequences by Noble, (1963). During fieldwork it was realized that even the *Sporobulus* is gradually being replaced by bracken fern, *Imperata cylindrica* and *Chromolaela odorata*.

More so, over grazing has also been linked to soil erosion due to the loss of water retention and runoff reduction capacity of vegetation. Over grazing is the harvesting of biomass of animal at a rate faster than its regenerating capacity, this result in a decline in the quality and quantity of biomass. It exposes the plant roots and the ground surface to agent of erosion. Trampling animals and continuous use of the same track by animals render the area vulnerable to gully formation. Overgrazing affects the health and reproductive capacity of animals. It causes range lands ecosystem to be fragile, increases the exposure of these rangelands and reduces their resilience to climate variability and change. Over grazing have a number of causes and occurred when carrying capacity of the range is exceeded. Consequently, the soil becomes more vulnerable to soil and wind erosion. Poor pasture or bad range lower livestock growth and survival. Vegetation also helps to modify the micro-climate and its removal by grazing herbivores invites desertification which is a critical problem that threatened the existence of the local people. Grazing land is inhabited by a number of domestic animals. Man has altered so much of the natural vegetation. The nature of the natural vegetation can only be deduced. It is doubtful whether any true natural vegetation grassland exists today. Much of it is either semi natural or affected by decades of grazing and burning or cultivation. Increasing livestock population associated with loss and degradation of habitats is becoming a serious problem as grazing land is witnessing continuous stress. Over grazing by livestock is a serious issue in some areas where most of the original vegetation has gradually been eroded and/or disappeared as a result of heavy disturbance by pastoralists and livestock. In many spot, it is devoid of protective mat of grass vegetation. Grazing area has been ruined by partial removal of their top soil. The direct effect of livestock in the area is bound to be conspicuous when considering the carrying capacity of pasture as evaluated from its biomass production and nutritional requirements of animals. The grazing land has limited capabilities in vegetative production due to adverse environment today including prolonged dry season, varying degree of poor soil, soil erosion, unwanted weeds, lack of or inadequate forage and grazing management. Despite the problem of human encroachment that is responsible for dwindling nature of grazing land in the study area, one of the major constraints to grazing land improvement has been the high stocking rates (Figure 6). Furthermore, the Fulani have retained their cattle complex altitude and the entry of the Fulani natives into grazing has enormously increased the stocking rate in the study area. The implication of the reducing rangeland on the stocking rate is indicative on the deteriorating nature of grazing lands. Further complication arises from the deterioration in grazing lands due to increase in unwanted weeds and woody growth or bush encroachment. From this situation in the study, what is deduced is the fact that livestock numbers are increasing on de grading and dwindling rangelands.

**Figure 3: Evolution of stocking rate per hectare**



Source: Realised from annual report of MINEPIA livestock, 2015 Ndop and Sabga

It can be realised that the evolution of stocking rates has not only by passed two hectares for good management pasture but it has touched 3-4 hectares of pasture / cattle. This indicates that the critical limit in the area has been surpassed. The vegetal devastation resulting from this is quiet conspicuous. Further addition in livestock numbers in the zone can lead to reckless destruction given the fact during field observation of the study area it, was affected by range loss. Glaring examples are found in transhumance trek route to the Ndop plain and around the summits and slopes and ridges of Sabga area. These over grazing, pasture degradation, high stocking capacities resulted to a reduction in pasture on grazing land and thus making leading to instability on grazing area because cattle and graziers need to move from place to place in search of pasture.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4. Soil erosion**

The impacts of grazing on the landscape of Sabga-Bamunka can be through soil erosion. Man is a decisive agent in erosion and its correlated effects for the past years (clearing, vegetal degradation). Human activities contribute in accelerating the rhythm of erosion within the study area to an aggressive point that man has entered into a network of research for solutions. The crisis of relief evolution by erosion corresponds to decisive changes. When the critical value is passed, we talk of limits. In effect geomorphologic application previews a scale, a variation limit, a point in time and space from which a phenomenon, spontaneously change their rhythms (slowness or rapid acceleration). This notion can be well understood with the presence of man within the area. The phenomena of erosion tend to drift from splash and sheet to rill and gully erosion

##### *Splash erosion*

Most soil material is uplifted and displaced by falling raindrops. This constitutes part of the surface wash which detaches and transports soil particles from the ground. This constitutes a mechanical process involving an expenditure of kinetic energy (Hudson, 1965). This form of erosion is the most dominant and recurrent on newly cultivated maize farmland and where there is massive vegetal destruction for the cultivation of bean and market gardening crops. It is also common around hurt where cattle assemble in the night. Splash erosion is one of the basic causes of the commencement of spectacular erosion in the area. The persistent impact of raindrops during heavy rainfall provokes the destruction of surface layer and distortion of their structure and elements. This often leads to the presence of loose fragment (clay, silt and sand) which are toasted or uplifted by raindrops at different angles of ejection. The mean splash saltation distance measured during light rain storms gave 18-28cm. Light rain however, enabled soil fragment to be found on the leaves of groundnut, beans and maize as they germinate.

The particles that are derived from splash saltation flux are transported with ease by surface runoff into small hollows. Here, small sediments concentrate to produce a layer which at times, with the aid of the high average temperature of the area may dry up. This situation is glaring around surfaces that have been trampled upon, around permanent rainy season pasture site and cattle transhumance itineraries. The battering and clogging of the soil of farm and range land of the Sabga-Bamunka area by initial raindrops obviously plays in soil permeability. This reduces the rate of infiltration and therefore increases the rate of surface retention.

##### *Sheet Erosion*

Sheet erosion, is quite noticeable on fairly flat surfaces like the flat till surface at Bamunka. It is also common in Sabga where vegetal cover of homogenous surface has been scrapped by hooves of cattle. A thin film of water accumulates on the surface, with a thickness of 2-4mm (though Moeyersons, 1989 holds < 3mm) before sweeping on the surface. The energy of the water which is derived from its velocity and consequently the capacity of the water to

erode are accentuated by the slope of the land. However, the nature of this water permits it to transport only small soil particles. Sometimes, the transportation of these tiny particles even leads to the formation of micro-hydraulic steps.

Also, on farms and grazing area, sheet erosion takes various forms. This often results from the combined force of rainfall and overland flow. In this way, clay, silt and sand is found in depression just below. This is because water that flows is not capable of transporting or carrying huge rock particles or organic waste on the surface.

#### *Rill Erosional Form*

After splash and sheet erosion, the more impermeable but less resistant surface can begin to offer some micro channels. Rill of 4-10cm developed on slopes of about 8°. These channels are obviously the result of incision of unconcentrated flow as they pave the way to the valleys. The down slope evolution of this form of erosion seem slow at the start since it contains less water and other abrasive tools. With time, as the drainage area expands, erosion also increases. This does not help to increase the volume of water but also tends to furnish more abrasive tools for rill enlargement.

This form of erosion as already noted is mostly found in adjoining areas of sheet erosion on recently opened farms, Mbororo dwellings, foot and cattle tracks and some farm to market roads. In the area of rill erosion, the joint effect of the kinetic energy of water droplets, the stagnation of water and routine passage of man and animals gives birth to these micro depressions on the weathered material. Rills of similar nature are brought about by farmland cultivation and construction works on houses.

#### *Gully Erosional Forms*

The continuous evolution in the size and shape of rills (which can be attributed to increase in volume, velocity and load of the runoff and more impermeable nature of the channel) culminates in more spectacular forms of gullying. Gullies evolved and incised in the superficial deposits, regolith paved by man and animal such as farm boundaries, foot path and cattle track. These gullies are predominant on old farmland. Most gullies in this area possess depths of 50cm to 8m and widths of 10cm-30cm. It was observed during field work that most mechanical strategies to combat soil erosion cannot be a panacea in the area, owing to its hilly steeping surface.

More so, gullies on slope of farmland and rangeland of the high plateau are developed on clayey soils. Some of these gullies have steep sides showing signs of the collapse of material. The aforementioned process is enhanced by water that scraps the bank to produce 'pot holes' or 'erosional pits'. Water is concentrated inside these pits as an uncovered void or interstice carrying water and follows a whirl or making it flow out. The sides of the pits have an accumulation of plant residues and other dead organic matter. The base of these pits is made up of large pebble and gravel of either volcanic rock or basement complex. These coarse particles are at time overwhelmed by silt-clay deposits. The greatest development is during the raining season because of provision of water meanwhile the dry season is relatively a dormant period. Continuous gullying often cedes to deep pavements that have a greater dimension. This is usually after considerable vertical down cutting and lateral erosion. The water borne by this channel enlarges their base through regressive erosion. The bank of such valleys becomes susceptible to landslide and slumping. These erosional forms resulted to pasture shortages and reduced grazing land area because most of the soil nutrient is wash and carried away by these processes thus leading to low productivity of pasture and unstable nature of grazing area.

## 5. Recommendation

### 5.1. Integration of Trees into crop/ livestock production system

This entails the growing of trees, crops and pasture/animals in a system to achieve an agro-sylvo-pastoral system. Two approaches of integrating trees are to be adopted here. The first approach is the integration of trees into crop/livestock system. Pastoralists who also rear livestock should be encouraged by the government and local authorities to plant life fences that would need little or no constant repair and reinforcement. This can be realized by encouraging the pastoralists to establish multipurpose hedgerows with fast growing fodder, shrub, tree and herbaceous species. Some of such species are *Erythrina*, *Gmelina*, *Fucus*, *Caesalpinia*, *Hibiscus* and *sisal* and *Mexican sunflower* also recommende by Nkwemoh (1999). Apart from serving as a vegetative barrier, reducing the direct impact of raindrops, facilitating infiltration and reducing runoff and soil erosion, these species serve a range of other purposes. For instance, *Erythrina* and *caesalpinia* used for live fencing even replace barbed wire or bamboo fences. *Erythrina* is also good feed for cattle and would therefore aid in alleviating the problem of shortage of pasture and overgrazing.

The second approach entails the integration of trees into pastures. This approach would be very appropriate in Sabga-Bamunka area. Pastoralists should be encouraged by the government and local authorities to plant trees. The ample space in this area can suppose a certain trilogy of landscape. This trilogy supposes that the base of the hill should be reserved under permanent vegetation composed of local trees like raffia that should be well protected from fire or other interference. The concave slope should be used for the cultivation of multi-purpose trees, crop and raising of small ruminants and birds. In this part of the slope, trees would serve as source of green manure for crop, shade and fodder.

Meanwhile the canopies of these trees would protect the soil and control soil erosion. The summit of the hill should be reserved for permanent rearing activities and cattle should never be left to roam. A multipurpose tree that should be planted in pasture is *Leucaena*. *Leucaena* is a genus of central America shrub and tree with about 10 species. *Leucaena* tiny flower form white, fluffy balls. They are usually self-pollinating, and the flower heads produce dropping clusters of thin, flat, almost straight pods. The green pods redden and harden with age, eventually splitting along both edge and ejecting the 15-30 seeds they contain. The shiny-brown flattened seeds have an impervious, wazy seed coat and must be treated to ensure quick and uniform germination. A method that gives 80% germination within 8 days involves treating the seeds with hot water for 2 to 3 minutes. Further increases can be obtained by then soaking the seed for 2 to 3 days. The seed should then be sun dried and stored prior to sowing (Nkwemoh 1999). Young or mature, green dry or ensiled, the forage is relished by livestock particularly in the dry season when green feed is scarce.

### 5.2. Promotion of Forage Conservation

The proposed Agrostological measures aimed at improving vegetation/pasture may be complemented by the conservation of forage. Found within the tropical climatic domain, the Sabga-Bamunka area enjoys a wet season (favourable for plant growth) and a dry (not very favourable for plant growth). Forage can readily sprout and retain a high nutritive value in the wet season. The forage should be readily provided to animals to keep them satisfied without moving too far in search of forage. This would result in reducing weight loss, spread of diseases and incidence of injuries. In the dry season, forage plants become scare and even dried, lignified and even become less nutritive. This aspect obliges the Bororos to go in search of pasture in the 'Commons' of the low and more humid areas.

Transhumance is not the best management system for a degraded landscape like that of the Sabga-Bamunka area. Dry season and zero grazing habit should be adapted. For this reason, some grass and leguminous species have been recommended for their dry season feed capacity and form of conservation. Those that can be conserved through hay (dry grass having matter

content of 80-85% of the original value and cut when still green) include, *Brachiaria ruziziensis* and *Hyparrhenia diplandra* which could be cut, predicted and staked when rainy season is ending. Other grasses like *Pennisetum purpureum* and *Trypsacuum laxum* are instead suitable for silage (fermented forage). Silage has a good dry matter percentage and a low cost of production that would salvage the precarious situation of the vegetation.

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## 6. Conclusion

According to Brookfield (1964), degradation is a perceptual term, and its usage in Sabga-Bamunka is a case in point. The focus of degradation debate is grazing and as a result, forage quality has been used as the major indicator of degradation, the increasing numbers of cattle and continuous grazing of pasture have not only initiated the existence of Graminae but also served as maintaining and perpetuating factors of the savanna grassland.

To add to the above, the impacts of grazing on the landscape of Sabga-Bamunka is not static, the situation has been made even more precarious by the invasion of bush and weeds with the construction of the Bamendjin Dam, erosion, mass movement and over grazing. It was also realized that pastoralist have not stayed without reactive and proactive measures such as mobility, paddocking system and pasture improvement. Since the different adaptation strategies are not panacea to the problems, the study made a number of recommendations. The proposed measures for grazing land improvement are; forage conservation, the controlled of the use of bush fire, the diseases and the adoption of a nation policy on rangeland. If these recommendations are implemented, recurrent impacts of grazing on the Sabga- Bamunka landscape can be prevented and this will lead to sustainable development and community intergradation.

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## TERRORISM AND PRIVATIZATION OF STATE SPACES IN THE SAHEL: CASE OF THE POLISARIO FRONT

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**Abstract:** *For several decades, the Sahel (Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Nigeria) has been at the heart of global insecurity. Several illicit trafficking activities are taking place there (drug and fuel trafficking, human trafficking, arms sales), encouraged by armed groups. These practices extend to southern Algeria, on the border with Mauritania, where the Polisario Front, an outdated political-military movement desperately trying to create a hypothetical state in southern Morocco, is active. In this way, it is obvious that a link can be established between the terrorist movements and the Polisario Front. This reflection intends to privilege the diachronic approach, by exploiting documentary sources and oral data from interviews in Bamako. At the end of this analysis, it can be affirmed that the Polisario Front participates in hostage-taking, ransom demands, and various illicit trafficking in the Sahel. Likewise, several jihadist movement fighters are recruited into the ranks of the Polisario Front fighters. In view of all this, the Polisario Front can be linked to a terrorist movement.*

**Key words:** violent extremism; illicit trafficking; terrorism; Polisario; Sahel.

### 1. Introduction

Sahel is today the subject of national and international political concerns. However, this area inhabited by nomadic populations and living from caravan trade, made the reputation of the Sahel in the Middle Ages. For several decades, the Sahel has thus become a worrying and disturbing subject. This is due to the numerous threats linked to the Sahelian fragility. It is thus a grey, under-administered zone that is beyond the control of the police, customs, army and public services of the countries that claim it. As a result, trafficking of all kinds is developing there: trafficking in drugs, cigarettes and arms, etc. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) had set up cells there with branches in Niger, Mali and northern Nigeria. These served as a tactical withdrawal base, training camps, and logistics supply networks (Pellerin and Trotignon, 2010: 84). The « Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat » (GSPC), a faction that emerged from the GIA in 1998 and became Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in September 2006, controls this space. Many other armed groups swarm the Sahel, including Ansar Dine, the MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad), the Katiba el-Mouwakaoune Bidima, the Mujao (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa), and Boko Haram. All of them recruit from among the populations present in the area and self-defense militias of Arab or black African origin (notably the Songhai and the Peuls). Finally, they have entered into connection with other armed movements such as the Polisario.

Sahel has been the subject of abundant scientific production, to the point of being called Sahelistan (Laurent, 2013). Similarly, terrorist groups (Masson, 2011; Zanoletti, 2020) and Sahelian security issues (Bonnecase and Brachet, 2013; Ben Taous, 2016; Ould Mohamedou, 2017) have been sufficiently studied. On the other hand, the Polisario, the main provider of in fighting terrorist movements has not yet been thoroughly researched. Likewise, this movement, which is very old (since 1973) and which calls for an imaginary state in southern Morocco, is involved in all illegal and illicit trafficking in the Sahel.

This reflection intends to highlight, beyond the interactions and harmful practices underway in the Sahel, the role of the main actors (armed groups) and the alliances between them. Specifically, the emphasis is placed on the Polisario for three reasons: it is a political-

military movement that enjoys the support of Algeria; it regularly diverts humanitarian aid to refugees in the Tindouf camps; it participates in all trafficking in the Sahel and supplies combatants to other terrorist groups. Given the complexity of the threats to the security of all Sahelian states, it is important to reflect on the following questions: what criminal interactions exist between terrorist groups in the Sahel and the Polisario Front? Otherwise, what similarities are possible at the heart of violent extremism and terrorism in this space? This work intends to focus on the theory of global security given the asymmetry of violence and the stealth of threats in the Sahel. For, it is recommended a holistic security (human, health, economic, political, civil, environmental, national, social and public security). To achieve this, the analyses are essentially based on documentary and oral data (testimonies) collected in Bamako from February 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### **1.The Sahel today: a context marked by violent extremism and terrorism**

The topicality of socio-political processes in the Sahel, particularly in Mali and Niger, epicenters of the Sahel, offers an opportunity to question the definition of diverse identities, and the geographical, political and moral configurations that are ideologized in this space. This requires a contextualization of the plural conflicts in the Sahel, which overdetermine a divisive political offer and a persistent socio-economic abduction.

#### **1.1. Sociogenesis of uncivil practices and the context of conflict emergence**

Sahel is a region of West Africa and a semi-desert zone that gives directly into sub-Saharan Africa. It covers an area of about 5 million km<sup>2</sup> with a population of about 90 million people (Bassou, 2017: 7). Sahelian societies have aroused renewed interest in recent years. This resurgence can be explained by the major risks that abound in this space and by the forms of violence that are developing there. As for the forms of violence affecting this area, they are both internal and external and have led to changes in the ways in which groups interact and define their respective identities. The effects of the current political and security instability in the Sahel are rooted in the depths of interactions between state-building processes, capitalism, migration, ineffective security systems, politicization of ethnicity (Hausa, Tuareg, Dogon, Songhai, etc.), the complexity of nomadism and pastoralism, economic production and ever-changing identities, etc. The effects of the current political and security instability in the Sahel are also rooted in the depths of interactions between state-building processes, capitalism, migration, ineffective security systems, politicization of ethnicity (Hausa, Tuareg, Dogon, Songhai, etc.), the complexity of nomadism and pastoralism, economic production and ever-changing identities, etc.

In recent years, some Sahelian countries have suffered coups d'état (Mauritania, Niger and Mali), to which have been added more or less scattered rebellions, resulting in the de jure or de facto partition of the constituted territories (Bonnetcase and Brachet, 2013 :5). All these political and military unrest, of increasing magnitude, occurred in a context marked by social tensions linked to economic difficulties, risk and food crises, including famine in 2010 and 2012 (Janin, 2006: 355). In addition, the activities of armed groups and criminality make the Sahelian space a high-risk zone.

However, the complexity of the security situation in the Sahel is a consequence of the Tuareg question and the Libyan crisis, which resulted in the assassination of Muammar Gaddafi on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011, followed by the dumping of arms in the Sahel. The main actors of the conflict dynamics are known (Luntumbue, 2012). These are Aqmi (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), Ansar Dine, MLNA (Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad), katiba el-Mouwakaoune Bidima, Mujao (Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest), and Boko Haram. The advent of Boko Haram in the Sahel (particularly in Nigeria, Chad, CAR and Cameroon) has made it possible, according to the African Research Center for Peace and Sustainable Development (CARPADD), to highlight three categories of countries: the epicenter

countries (Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria and Burkina-Faso); collateral countries (Senegal, Cameroon and Chad) and countries at risk (Algeria and CAR). These countries "were among the countries most exposed to violent extremism in terms of the number of terrorist attacks recorded by the UNDP between 2006 and 2015. Thus, according to data provided by Afrobarometer, in 2014 alone, Boko Haram had 453 incidents (compared to 1,071 for Daesh); 1,742 injured (compared to 5,799 for Daesh) and 6,644 dead (compared to 6,073 for Daesh)" (Buchanan-Clarke and Lekalake, 2016: 9-10), making Boko Haram the most dangerous and deadliest terrorist group in the world.

Despite the mobilization of international (UN, EU, World Bank, etc.), African, and regional (African Union and ECOWAS, etc.) organizations and the support of bilateral partners (France, Germany, Belgium, Canada, United States, etc.), violence and insecurity seem to have reached high levels in the region. Thus, between January 2018 and May 2019, the number of incidents in the region was two to four times higher than in 2013, at the height of the Malian crisis.

The acuity of cross-border migratory movements and the intensity of widespread illegal trafficking as well as the regional humanitarian and security challenges in the Sahel call for several international actions (military cooperation, technical assistance, project financing, humanitarian assistance, etc.). These, requiring greater coherence and proactivity, are carried out at the regional (with the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS), continental (with the African Union) and international (with the United Nations and bilateral partners such as France) levels.

## **1.2. The Current Political Context**

More than a century after independence, the countries of the Sahel are struggling to experience a negotiated transition to a peaceful and homogenous democracy. Each country thus presents a particular regime with regard to cultural and social specificities and historical trajectory, although there are real similarities. In Niger, for example, the semi-presidential (or semi-parliamentary) regime imported and transposed by the Sovereign National Conference of July 1991 is no less ambiguous with regard to the evolution of the institutions put in place and the balance of power between political actors and institutional bodies (Narey, 2016). According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), there are 123 political parties, 40 of which constitute the basis of the presidential majority and fewer than 10 are represented in the National Assembly. In Mali, after the succession of political-military regimes that severely undermined the country's stability, constitutional order returned with the election, by direct universal suffrage, of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by 77.61% of the votes cast. He was re-elected on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2018 with 67.17% of the votes for a second five-year term. On 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020, he was ousted from power in a military coup.

In Mauritania, the exercise of power is subject to the control of resources and above all to family, clan and ethnic considerations. A one-party state with authoritarian presidential rule since independence in 1960, Mauritania also experienced several decades of military rule until the election of Mohamed Ould Ghazouani on June 23<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The latter, who received 52.01% of the vote, inherited a country with a drained economy and huge security challenges. Burkina Faso has had four republics with four regimes: 1960-1973; 1974-1980; 1980-1991; 1991-2014. After Blaise Compaoré resigned from power on October 31, 2014 following a popular uprising, Burkina Faso experienced several transitions: a military transition with Lieutenant-Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida; an evanescent military regime with General Gilbert Diendéré, President of the Council of the Republic, and a military regime with the President of the National Council for Democracy (September 17-23, 2015) and a civil transition with Michel Kafando. The election of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré on December 29, 2015 marked the return to constitutional order. Chad has a full presidential regime with a strong propensity for presidentialism. Idriss Déby Itno, who has been in power since December 1990, holds most of the power after the abolition

of the post of prime minister and the extension of his powers, contained in the current constitution, promulgated on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

In the current political context, destabilizing dynamics are taking hold to make the responses to be made irreversible. Indeed, the proliferation of criminal activities and violent jihadism led by armed groups and Boko Haram and the risk of a conflagration in the region (or even an extension to other regions of Africa), constitute urgent security challenges. Holistic responses to these challenges are first political, then security and finally economic. At the political level, the establishment of the rule of law and good governance are some of the prerequisites that can guarantee inclusive dialogue, which is the only guarantee of political discussion, crisis prevention, recovery and management. On the security front, terrorist groups are a target. To achieve this, the restructuring of the national armies of Sahelian countries is timely, in order to increase their predictive and operational effectiveness. The French operations Serval (January 2013-July 2014) and Barkhane (since 2014), supported by the United Kingdom, Denmark (equipment) and the United States (intelligence), as well as MINUSMA (United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali). The objective being the gradual takeover of the security situation by the national armies, the creation of the G5 Sahel is part of this process. It is a force created in February 2014 with the aim of "bringing the five states to achieve coordination of their development and security policies in a context of widespread vulnerability, growing terrorism and a fairly visible infrastructure deficit" (Nwatchock A Birema, 2018).

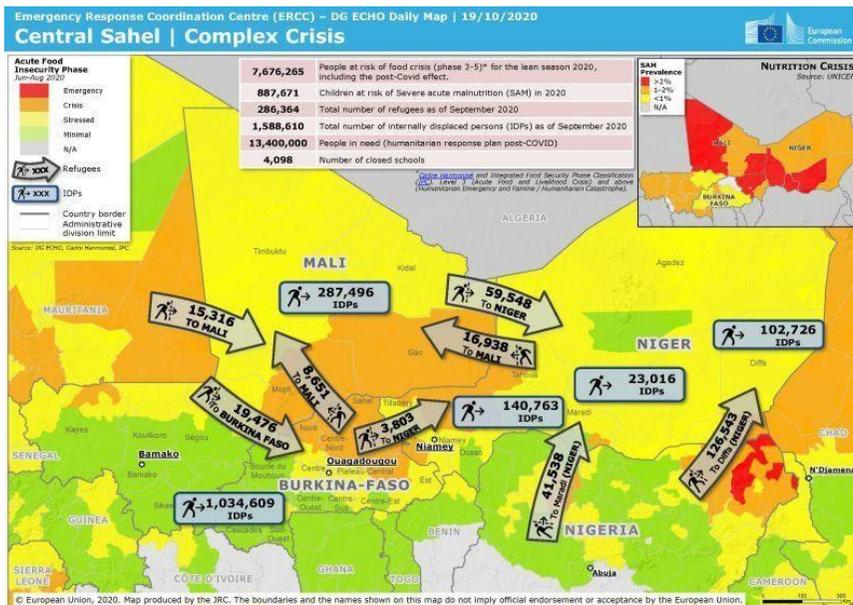
### **1.3. Precariousness in a context of socio-economic kidnapping**

Sahel is a vast area that presents many paradoxes at the socio-economic level. The Human Development Index (HDI) remains highly contrasted. In 2018, only Algeria, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa (and 85<sup>th</sup> in the world), has a high FDI. For the same year, Nigeria, ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in Africa (and 157<sup>th</sup> in the world), Mauritania (24<sup>th</sup> in Africa and 159<sup>th</sup> in the world), Mali (46<sup>th</sup> in Africa and 182<sup>nd</sup> in the world), Burkina Faso (47<sup>th</sup> in Africa and 183<sup>rd</sup> in the world), Chad (50<sup>th</sup> in Africa and 186<sup>th</sup> in the world) and Niger (53<sup>rd</sup> in Africa and lastly, 189<sup>th</sup> in the world) have a reliable FDI. In the Sahel, the soil is very poor and natural resources are scarce and fragile. Agriculture is the main means of subsistence and employed 60% of the working population in 2013 and accounted for 35% of GDP for all countries in the region. Similarly, 80% of the total population is directly dependent on both agricultural activities (livestock, fishing and farming) and natural resources (Abdulai, Nelson, Thomas, Zougmore and Roy-Macauley, 2013). The Human Development Index (HDI) of the Sahelian countries, according to an OXFAM Report published in July 2019, is among the lowest in the world. This is explained by inequalities in income and wealth, which have a significant impact on access to healthcare and education. According to the same Report, nearly 40% of the inhabitants of the Sahel live below the poverty line and more than half do not have access to drinking water. As a result, 2.5 millions school-age children do not attend school.

Economically, Sahel is less representative in terms of available data. Indeed, the GDP of the Sahel as a whole represented 0.18% of world GDP for 2% of the world population in 2014. Agriculture is the main economic activity. In Burkina Faso, it accounts for 30% of GDP and 80% of employment and remains dependent on rainfall. Gold and cotton generate 95% of the country's export revenues and Switzerland and South Africa are the main destination countries for these exports. In November 2018, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) published the Global Terrorism Index, a research and ranking of target countries. It found that Nigeria (3<sup>rd</sup> worldwide) is presented as having a very high impact of terrorism. Mali (22<sup>nd</sup> in the world) and Niger (23<sup>rd</sup> in the world) are presented as countries with a high impact of terrorism. Burkina Faso (37<sup>th</sup> in the world) and Chad (38<sup>th</sup> in the world) are intermediate impact countries. Algeria (54<sup>th</sup> in the world) and Côte d'Ivoire (63<sup>rd</sup> in the world) are low impact countries, while Mauritania (149<sup>th</sup> in the world) is very low impact (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2018).

The gender approach seems to be less rooted in habits in this zone, since men still dominate political and social management, to the detriment of women. Because of discriminatory social norms (beliefs, attitudes, practices and other laws), women and girls in the Sahel have very limited access to decision-making spaces and life resources; this increases their differentiated inequalities and vulnerability. Since women's status within the household and family is governed by social institutions, this leads to inconveniences (early marriage and pregnancy, strong parental authority, lack of inheritance rights, etc.) correlated with economic inequalities and social practices that are very unfavorable to women. Similarly, although education is a major concern in the five Sahelian countries covered by this study, nearly 80% of women were illiterate in some regions of Mali in 2015 (Affa'a-Mindzie, 2015: 6). These patriarchal traditions and misogynistic interpretations thrive in an environment dominated by the Muslim religion, which limits women's public participation. In the same wake, politics is perceived as a male universe and women are not yet engaged in it's masse, despite some normative reforms. This is the example of Senegal with the law on gender parity adopted in 2010.

Sahel is also marked by agropastoral decolonization (bringing together Peule, Mossi and Gourmantché communities) and is characterized by recurrent episodes of food deficit (Janin, 2006: 358) and humanitarian crisis. According to data provided by the World Bank and taken up by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the growing conflict in parts of Burkina Faso, Mali and western Niger "threatens lives and livelihoods, exacerbates food insecurity and malnutrition, and jeopardizes peace and social cohesion" (OCHA, 2019). As a result, 1.8 million people face critical food insecurity in these regions, and 400,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition. With more than seven million food insecure people, five million children at risk of malnutrition, 4,000 schools closed and nearly 900,000 students affected by the various crises, the region is highly vulnerable. The map below shows the threshold of humanitarian emergencies in the Central Sahel.



Source : European Union/Emergency Response Coordination, « Central Sahel : Complex Crisis », DG ECHO daily Map, 19th October 2020.

Thus, the humanitarian drama is perceived through the waves of refugees and internally displaced persons. In May 2019, there were approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso, 100,000 in Mali and nearly 70,000 in two regions of Niger,

namely Tillaberi and Tahoua. In addition to these, Chad and Niger hold the record for the number of refugees: 392,000 refugees hosted in Chad (including 310,000 Sudanese, 73,000 Central Africans and about 9,000 Nigeriens) and 166,093 in Niger (World Bank, 2017: 5). It is better to conclude that the above data, which are more or less worrying, "are the result of long-standing criminal practices that have been consolidated at the common borders of these countries, including: religious fundamentalism, the emergence of new acute religiosities, religious intolerance, imperfect local and territorial governance, massive circulation of adulterated fuel; trafficking in livestock, human beings and identity documents; illicit financial flows, prostitution of young girls and land pressure, etc." (World Bank, 2017: 5). It is in this context that the Polisario carries out an illicit activity marked by a discourse of violence, youth extremism, smuggling and the provision of combatants to terrorist groups.

## **2. The Polisario from yesterday to today: between destatization, smuggling and terrorism in the Sahel**

Several researches made in the Sahel allow to highlight the nuisance of Polisario. This pro-independence movement is today implicated in terrorist acts and the various traffics in the Sahel. Consequently, it contributes to the threat to regional and international peace and security.

### **2.1. The Polisario: Genesis and modus operandi of a splinter movement**

The Polisario Front or Polisario is an abbreviated form of the Spanish Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro. It means Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el Hamra and Rio de Oro, two provinces of the AMroc, located in the southern part. The Polisario is a student movement at first, then political and finally armed, born in the Moroccan Sahara on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1973. Initially, this clandestine movement inspired by the Cuban revolutionary theses of Ernesto Che Guevara, made up of about fifty activists, fought the Spanish occupier under the name of the Sahara Liberation Movement (MLS). Mohamed Sidi Brahim Bassiri, a young Sahrawi who studied in Cairo and then Damascus and made contact with the Muslim brothers in Egypt, was the founder and leader of the movement. Disappeared after his arrest by the Spanish colonizer, some Sahrawi students at the Moroccan university chose a new leader. El Ouali Mustapha Sayed, a young medical student in Rabat of Sahrawi origin, is thus chosen. These developments took place in a context of psychosis and East-West tension very marked by the declining figurehead of Francisco Franco Bahamonde, the ecclesiastical and charismatic dictator, a fervent defender of the socialist theses of the Axis powers.

The Polisario seems to defend an unrealistic hypothesis, that of the creation of an independent republic in the south of Morocco: the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). This idea, the expression of a distant imagination, without being accepted by the UN, had been approved minimally by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Algeria, a neighboring country to Morocco and the main declared support of the Polisario thinks it will find a geostrategic breath that will allow it to ensure regional leadership and access to the Atlantic Ocean. The SADR is an emanation of the imagination of certain political operators, without socio-political and territorial reality. For, neither the southern regions of Morocco (the region of Dakhla Oued-Eddahab and the region of Laâyoune-Sakia el Hamra), nor the ten other regions of Morocco know other visible attributes of sovereignty than those internationally recognized in the Cherifian Kingdom. It is indeed a "Republic of the selfies", ghostly in essence, having known an evanescent glory to the benefit of the Cold War and ideological contrarities.

The Cuban spy, Juan Vivès, witness and leading actor of the project of the globalization of the Cuban revolution in the Maghreb under Ernesto Che Guevara, in several testimonies, describes the role of Cuba and Algeria in the installation of training and indoctrination camps for the self-proclaimed revolutionaries of southern Morocco, the first recruits of the Polisario

Front. Che Guevara's revolutionary logorrhea thus inspired some political entrepreneurs and laid the foundations for the SADR's state surrealism. With the Cold War, political and geostrategic issues often rationalized irrational diplomatic ties, with recognition of state fictions. This is the case for the fictitious mobile republic (SADR), self-proclaimed in 1976 at the instigation of Algeria, devoid of attributes of sovereignty and status, never recognized by the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the European Union and several international organizations around the world. The U.S. Executive Order 2020, recognizing the Sahara as Moroccan territory, is a decisive step towards ending this imaginary conflict of several decades. Long before, since 2016, more than 50 countries have withdrawn their recognition to the SADR. Indeed, the Polisario finds itself politically isolated. The only way out it has left is to over-collect in the Sahel, supplying terrorist groups and participating in the illicit trafficking that takes place there.

## **2.2. The Sahel as a space for Polisario levies**

The Sahel, a zone of diverse trafficking and rebellions, is undergoing two major geopolitical shifts: the change of routes in the routing of cocaine from Latin America to the Middle East, and the change in the distribution of cocaine from Latin America to Europe and the rise of terrorism from Mali. Jihadist-oriented organized crime in the Sahel benefits from large areas marked by porous borders and the lack of cooperation between the states of the region; hence the profitability of this economy of crime. Serigne Bamba Gaye described their *modus operandi* and the source of income of these armed groups in the following terms:

Several kidnappings of Westerners were carried out by the terrorist organization between 2004 and 2016 in Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Algeria. In most of these kidnappings, the release of the hostages was accompanied by a ransom. Between 2006 and 2012 alone, AQIM received 60 million euros in ransoms paid by the countries of origin of the hostages. AQMI will be emulated by the MUJAO, Ansar Dine, Al Mourabitoune, jihadist groups operating in northern Mali since 2012, will follow in its footsteps. A hostage "kidnapping industry" was born in the Sahel. It will be the main source of funding for jihadist groups (...). Another source of income for jihadist groups comes from the money they get from protecting convoys that cross the areas they control. Shipments of illicit products (drugs, cigarettes, SALW, etc.) are secured by elements of jihadist groups over specified distances in the Sahel-Saharan strip and in return the traffickers pay a percentage of the value of the goods transported. The collusion between terrorism and organized crime is very clear. It shows the links and connections between these two types of criminal actors (Bamba Gaye, 2017: 15-16).

It is indeed in this zone that the Polisario, a group advocating separatist independence, operates, which is traversed by the exasperation of a fight without a future and the psychological exhaustion of the youth base attracted by the profit motive. Since the beginning of this decade, this organization has been very weakened, after the construction of the "wall of defense," completed in 1987 and the cease-fire signed in 1991. The withdrawal of the recognition of the SADR by several countries and the rigidity of its leadership aggravates the Polisario's isolation on the African and international scene. This is why we note a reconversion of combatants and the desertion of hundreds of young people, captive in the Tindouf camps, which today swell the numbers of recruits from smuggling and organized crime in the Sahel. Moreover, a study published in November 2005 by the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (Moniquet, 2005: 5), indicates that 6,000 Polisario combatants, around 60% of the workforce, exasperated by the opulence of the movement's leaders and delays in payment of pay, had withdrawn to Mauritania and converted into businessmen after the ceasefire signed in 1991. Simultaneously with this sclerosis, the Polisario increasingly lost all legitimacy among

the captive population of the camps of Tindouf and the surrounding areas ; hence the emergence of dissident currents, such as the Khat Achahid (martyr's path) movement, created in July 2004, which advocates negotiation to resolve the conflict. It is thus clear from several reports that the Polisario is involved in smuggling and organized crime in the Sahel (Laurent, 2013). On this subject, Mathieu Pellerin and Yves Trotignon state.

In these under-administered zones controlled by trafficking, a multitude of armed struggle movements have swarmed in the Saharo-Sahelian confines over the past three decades, recruiting among the various populations present in the zone: Sahraoui (Polisario Front); Maure (Cavaliers du changement); Touareg (the fifteen or so fronts active in both Mali and Niger during the 1990s, and their current descendants, whether it be the Alliance for Democratic Change in Mali and the Niger Movement for Justice / MNJ in Niger) ; Toubou (in eastern Niger and northern Chad), as well as a multitude of self-defense militias of Arab or black African origin (Pelletin and Trotignon, 2010 : 48).

By being part of the maintenance of smuggling, the Polisario appears to be a criminal movement. For, 'the Sahrawi refugee camps of the Polisario Front in south-west Algeria, southern Libya and northern Mali are also transit zones [for arms smuggling]. Because of its strategic position, the city of Tindouf represents the ideal crossing point between the eastern and western Sahel" (Ammour, 2006). At the same time, the Polisario is regularly blacklisted by reports from international and human rights organizations on the detour of humanitarian aid to the refugees and displaced persons from the Tindouf camps. The 2007 OLAF (European Anti-Fraud Office) report, made public in 2015, denounced the misappropriation of humanitarian aid. These misappropriations involved all or part of an amount of 105 million euros, between 1994 and 2005. Not only was Algeria accused in this report of having illegally levied a 5% tax on the amount of humanitarian aid intended to finance purchases on the spot (i.e. in Algeria), but also the Polisario leaders had stored the diverted aid before redistributing it on sub-Saharan markets, notably in Mauritania. Similarly, some Polisario leaders, guilty of the said detour, were owners of the luxury villas bought in southern Europe. In addition to these misappropriations of humanitarian aid, Algeria was suspected of voluntarily overestimating the number of refugees in the Tindouf camps in order to unfairly obtain substantial aid from humanitarian agencies. This mafia partition is proliferating and could, at least in part, justify the opposition of the Polisario and Algeria to the census of the populations of the Tindouf camps by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

### **2.3. The threats to regional peace and international security issues**

The spread of criminal acts around Tindouf and the Polisario's connections with the myriad terrorist groups in the Sahel is today a challenge to regional, African and international peace and security. All the more so as the Sahel is a land of opportunities and challenges. However, the combination of several endogenous factors of instability (failed states, terrorism, the Tuareg rebellion, various forms of trafficking, etc.) makes it a particular concern and attention. For, despite its inhospitable geography, the Sahel offers a haven for terrorist groups, drug trafficking and illegal immigration networks, and other criminal networks that directly threaten neighboring African regions and Europe. The underlying challenge is economic before it is security and political. Mauritania is, in many respects, a major iron ore deposit, useful for the steel industry in Europe. Niger, the world's fourth largest Producer of uranium and supplier of round 8.7 percent of world production, converts 12 percent of the Eus néés, and has endormons available and inexploité reserves (Grégoire, 2011: 206-225). In addition, European plans for the production of solar energy, through Desertec, are foreseen. Furthermore, the Sahel is the strategic transit area for the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline project (Fabiani, 2009: 9-12) which aims to bring Nigerian gas to Europe.

In view of this presentation, the Sahel offers strategic depth to North Africa and by extension to West Africa. Indirectly, Central Africa and the Red Sea basin are also connected to it, at their maritime, land and air borders. The geopolitical dynamics prevailing there thus extend to the Mediterranean borders and the European Union (Baghzouz, 2014: 195-207). The existence of mercenaries and other terrorist groups that consider the Sahel as a sanctuary for their activities is thus a threat to peace and collective security. The acuity of cross-border migratory movements and the intensity of widespread illegal trafficking as well as the regional humanitarian and security challenges in the Sahel call for several international actions (military cooperation, technical assistance, project financing, humanitarian assistance, etc.). These, requiring greater coherence and proactivity, are carried out at the regional (with the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS), continental (with the African Union, AU) and international (with the United Nations and bilateral partners such as France).

### 3. Conclusion

Almost all of the Sahel is beyond the control of politically constituted states. Several private actors and armed groups have for several decades now been engaged in all the reprehensible practices. The Polisario Front is thus implicated in all trafficking and threats in the Sahel. In the current political context, the destabilizing dynamics are becoming entrenched to make the responses to be provided irreversible. Indeed, the proliferation of criminal activities and violent jihadism led by armed groups and terrorists and the risk of a conflagration in the region (or even an extension to other regions of Africa), constitute urgent security challenges. Holistic responses to these challenges are first political, then security, and finally economic (Chegraoui and Benabbad, 2018). At the political level, the establishment of the rule of law and good governance are some of the prerequisites that can guarantee inclusive dialogue, the only guarantee of political discussion, crisis prevention, recovery and management. In terms of security, terrorist groups are a target. To achieve this, the restructuring of the national armies of the Sahelian countries is timely, in order to increase their provisional and operational effectiveness, beyond the achievements of the French operation Serval (January 2013-July 2014), Barkhane (since 2014) and UNMISMA (United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali). The objective being the gradual takeover of the security situation by the national armies, the creation of the G5 Sahel is part of this process. It is a force created in February 2014 with the aim of "bringing the five states to achieve coordination of their development and security policies in a context of widespread vulnerability, growing terrorism and a fairly visible infrastructure deficit" (Nwatchock A Birema, 2018). At the economic level, it is necessary to address effective responses, build economies and drastically reduce unemployment among young people, the preferred targets of armed groups. Similarly, fundamental economic and social rights (access to school, health services, drinking water, sufficient food, fair distribution of the fruits of growth, etc.) and political rights (electoral transparency, justice, equity, etc.) are of absolute necessity to curb the various threats. In view of all this, it is important, at the heart of the ubiquitous rooting of transnationalized (youth-dominated) violent extremism (Arnaud, 2016) at the borders of the Sahelian countries, to develop a better understanding (including a harmonized struggle) of the process of indoctrination, radicalization and violent extremism. For, it is necessary to : rethink the relationship between states and societies that is at the root of the rise of violent extremism in the Sahelian zone; question/evaluate public policies whose failure has created social injustices between the center and the national peripheries; analyze and improve the (authoritarian) strategies and responses of national authorities, which generally produce contrary effects; identify/categorize the status of extremists (leaders, actors, supporters and sympathizers) for a better adaptation of discourse (political and religious) and political and military responses ; Involve the private sector, religious authorities, women, and youth in preventing and combating

violent extremism in the Sahel; design and implement a transnational strategy to combat violent extremism; develop the best tools for de-radicalization; adapt differentiated African responses based on the European "toolbox" (European security program, etc.); and develop a strategy to combat violent extremism in the Sahel) and the French "toolbox" (e.g. a system for listening to and reporting radicalization, etc.) for combating violent extremism.

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## PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ROMANIA DURING 1940-1944

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**Abstract:** *During Antonescu's rule, the Federation of Jewish Communities (F.U.C.E.) and later the Jewish Center (C.E.R.) organized the struggle for the survival of the Jews through numerous community institutions, many with a social role. This social activity was organized under the auspices of the Autonomous Aid Commission (C.A.A.), established in January 1941, an important role being played by Wilhelm Filderman. The commission organized and supervised all social action throughout this period, fulfilling one of the moral commandments of Shevot: „Every Jew is responsible for another Jew” (Şevout 39, 71). All the spaces where philanthropic aid activities took place were also centers of resistance, including spiritual, a place for socializing and exchanging ideas, information and encouragement in troubled times. For the leadership of the Jewish community in Romania, the fate of the deportees in Transnistria was a constant concern. Actions to help and rescue them have been a component of survival efforts. This material is a short presentation of the social and health effort of the Jewish communities in Romania during the Antonescu regime to help its members, including those deported to Transnistria, to survive the scourge of war.*

**Key words:** social activity; F.U.C.E.; Antonescu regime; Transnistria; Filderman

### 1. Introduction

In the organization of the struggle of the Jews from Romania for survival during the reign of Ion Antonescu from 1940-1944, the decisive role belonged to the community institutions. An entire institutional network of worship, culture, education and social assistance functioned to compensate for the material, moral, social and spiritual frustrations imposed on Jews by the Antonescu regime (Benjamin, 2005: 351-352). In the years 1940-1941 the main body that coordinated the activity of these institutions was the Federation of Jewish Communities (F.U.C.E.). The President of the Federation, Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, was the initiator and political leader of Jewish life and in this historical moment, when the Jewish community in Romania faced existential problems among the most complicated in its entire history. Although the activity had to focus on solving problems related to daily life, because all anti-Jewish measures affected aspects of daily life, it did not have a narrow pragmatic dimension.

Solving problems required tact, horizon, political elasticity and the ability to adapt to the concrete historical condition. In this context, Wilhelm Filderman adopted the tactics of legal struggle, the way of petitions, audiences and establishing contacts with Romanian political and clerical personalities with influence in government circles who agreed to intervene in favor of the Jews, an activity he continued even after abolition of the Federation. The activity of F.U.C.E. led by Filderman was not to the liking of the Antonescu authorities nor of the German Counselor for Jewish Affairs in Romania Gustav Richter. On December 16, 1941, by Decree-Law no. 3415, it was decided to dissolve this organisation (Official Gazette, 1941; 7844).

The assistance activity took place, first, under the auspices and within the Federation of Jewish Communities, then of the Jewish Center. The Aid Commission (C.A.A.), established in January 1941 and functioning until August 1944, played a special role. , the families of the Iași pogrom of June 1941, where about 10,000 Jews were killed, Jews suspected of belonging to the Communist Party imprisoned in the concentration camps of Târgu-Jiu and Caracal, but also Jews from the forced labor detachments set up in the summer of 1941.

The C.A.A. benefited, from the beginning, from the subsidy of the Joint, which was able to continue its activity in Romania and during the war. The committee was chaired by M. Zimer, chairman, and Fred Șaraga, A. Schwefelberg, A. Costiner, Cornel Iancu and Benvenisti, members.

In the summer of 1941, her efforts were focused on helping the evacuees from the rural area and from small towns (aid in money, effects, dishes).

## **2. Aid activity**

### **2.1 Transnistria activity**

The action to help Jews deported to Transnistria began in late 1941 - early 1942. After countless interventions, the Federation received permission to send aid to Transnistria on December 17, 1941, with the publication of the Decree-Law on its dissolution. The International Red Cross transferred significant sums from abroad through the C.A.A. to help Jews in Transnistria. After the death of tens of thousands of Jews in Transnistria, from cold, hunger, typhus epidemics, in the winter of 1941-1942, only in November 1942, Radu Lecca, approved the shipment of medicines, clothing, and other basic necessities (Gazeta Jewish, 1942). On January 8, 1943, Gingold empowered pharmacist Izu Fondier to procure medicines and health effects on behalf of the Jewish Central for shipment to Transnistria (Ancel VII, 1986: 166).

As the situation of the Jews in the Transnistrian camps worsened, Radu Lecca asked the Jewish community to increase the number of parcels sent to Transnistria (Ancel, V, 1986: 319-320). According to the report of the Aid Commission of 1943, between February 18, 1942 and August 4, 1943, packages worth 331,000,000 lei were sent to the Jews of Transylvania. The packages also contained injections, typhoid vaccines, working tools, windows, boards, nails, caustic soda for soap and salt, goods of 500,000,000 lei (Carp, III, 1947: 283, 302).

In January 1943, the first delegation of the CAA and the Central Assistance Department traveled to Transnistria to control the distribution of aid sent.

Although they were going to visit the 140 camps and ghettos in Transnistria, the members of the delegation met in the Balta ghetto with 60 representatives from 25 camps and ghettos and visited one of the three orphanages in Moghilev. The delegation consisted of lawyers Fred Șaraga and Iosif Eber Cohen, engineer Iacov Schechter and Iehiel Marcovici, and took place despite opposition of Governor Alexianu, a visit approved by Antonescu (Ancel, V, 1986: 469). During this visit, in Moghilev, Șaraga distributed 6,600,000 lei (Ancel, V, 1986: 353-358).

Fred Șaraga's report presented the real, disastrous situation of the deported Jews, of the 72,214 Jews in the territory of seven counties and that everything that was sent as aid through the Central Bank is not a tiny part of what is necessary; the situation of the 5,000 orphaned children is disastrous; the entire population is malnourished,

weak and without clothes. The deportees could be saved only by using them in productive work and helped with clothing, medicine and food (ACSIER, fund III, file 300: 200-205).

Following Lecca's approval, the Commission also sent food and clothing to the 1179 Jewish detainees in the Vapniarka camp (Ancel, III, 1986: 299). Through pharmacist Izu Fondier, Centrala purchased medicines and health effects to be shipped to Transnistria (Ancel, VII, 1986: 40). Only between February 18, 1942 and August 4, 1943, they sent 331 million lei to the Jews of Transnistria. These aids contained medicines, work tools, windows, boards, nails, clothes, clothes, the total amount of these aids being half a billion lei (Carp, III, 1947: 283, 302).

19 collective aids were sent to Transnistria, amounting to 81,201,254 lei, about 30 million lei in food, 81,669,800 lei, in money sent by the relatives in the country of those deported. 13 transports of medicines and 10 parcels were made in the amount of 14,501,462 lei (MFA, fund Problem 33, dos 10 bis / 1943: 234-235). The effects sent by the Aid Commission and by the relatives of the deportees were worth 261 million lei. 13 shipments of household items worth 11,267,473 lei were also sent. Also for those in Transnistria were shipped 10 wagons with salt, ie 150 tons, 15 wagons with coal, ie 300 tons, four wagons with windows (Gingold, 1944: 107-110).

**Table 1. Receipts and payments to Transnistria**

<b>ENTRIES</b>	
Bucharest offertory	25.831.799 lei
Province offertory	26.865.811 lei
Miscellaneous offertory	32.616.626 lei
Orphans offertory	35.697.541 lei
Special share of 15% of the exceptional contribution	16.626.535 lei
	<b>Total 207.638.312 lei</b>
<b>PAYMENT</b>	
Collective remittances	111.210.254 lei
Drugs	14.501.462 lei
Shoes, effects	8.471.782 lei
Materials, tools, timber, windows, salt, etc	39.840.400 lei
Packaging, customs, insurance, transport costs	12.299.768 lei
Aid to those who left Bucharest	798.152 lei
	<b>Total payment 187.067.818 lei</b>

Source: Gingold, 1944: 110-111

Despite all efforts, the aid was still insufficient. A memorandum dated August 8, 1943 from Dr. W. Filderman to the Prime Minister after his return from Transnistria reflects the plight of the deportees. A new delegation, led by Fred Charaga, traveled to Transnistria in early October 1943 to assess the situation.

For the leadership of the Jewish community in Romania, the fate of the deportees in Transnistria was a constant concern. Actions to help and rescue them have been a component of survival efforts.

Simultaneously with the help of those from Transnistria, the C.A.A. and the assistance section of the C.E.R. had to intensify the actions to help those mobilized to

compulsory labor. They did not receive any subsidy or equipment from the state authorities.

## **2.2 Helping deportees from Dorohoi**

The Relief Commission also provided support to the Jewish returnees in Dorohoi, a total of 6,107 Jews out of the 10,000 deported Jews. For their repatriation, two delegations left for Transnistria in December 1943. The first, led by Fred Șaraga, arrived in Moghilev, and the second, led by lawyer Dadu Rosenkrantz, in Tiraspol. The Jews in these camps were provided with clothing and food and money to return to Dorohoi. The commission contributed to the redevelopment of the houses of the deportees from Dorohoi, offered them food and clothes worth 15 million lei. The returnees received social benefits amounting to 10,000 lei for each family and 5,000 lei for each orphan (Ancel VIII, 1986: 552-554). The aid offered was 18 million lei, being offered through the envoys of the Central, H. Covaci and H. Scharf (Ancel VII, 1986: 634-635).

## **2.3. Return of the orphans from Transnistria**

Another action of the Aid Commission was the return of the orphans from Transnistria, of the almost 2000 Jews that fell to the Commission. The idea was accepted in May 1943 by the Deputy Prime Minister of Romania, Mihai Antonescu, and by the Vice President of the International Red Cross. In the autumn of 1943, orphaned children were in 14 orphanages, the conditions in which they lived being among the most miserable. For their repatriation, two delegations left, one led by Fed Saraga, which gathered 1,400 Jewish orphans in Moghilev, and the second, led by lawyer Dadu Rosenkrantz, went to Tiraspol and Tighina, where there were 484 orphans. This delegations, fed, dressed and brought them to the country on March 6, 1944, and were cared for by nine Moldovan communities: Roman, Botoșani, Huși, Vaslui, Bârlad, Fălticeni, Piatra-Neamț and Bacău. In April-May 1944, 200 orphans were transferred to Focșani and another 1000 to Buzău, to be transferred to Bucharest in June (Ancel V, 1986: 576-584).

From here, with the help of the Relief Commission, hundreds of orphans emigrated to Israel with the ships Kazbeck, Belacitta, Bulbul and Moreno. Unfortunately, about 100 orphans perished as a result of the sinking in the Black Sea in August 1944 by a Russian submarine, the ship Mefkure, which had 394 emigrants on board (Artzi, 1973: 28-32).

## **2.4. Helping Jews in labor detachments**

Jewish organizations were obliged to replace state bodies, which, in the case of the Army, were themselves responsible for equipping the troops, while in the case of Jewish detachments this obligation fell to Jews and Jewish organizations.

Communities distributed aid to 58,000 needy people, refugees and those in forced labor detachments; supported 50,000 evacuees from the country's localities in the county capitals and larger cities; distributed clothing, footwear, food, firewood to the camps and to the 40,000 poor who served a hot meal daily in the community canteens (Geller, 2004: 155-156).

According to a report of the C.E.R. of August 17, 1943, aid was distributed to 30,154 workers out of the 45,712 (66%) in the work detachments, aid amounting to

306 million lei (Jewish Almanac, 1943-1944: 196-198 ). For the operation of these canteens, the County Offices received from the CER a contribution of 53,524,374 lei. In the autumn of 1943 alone, 6,000 poor people ate at the canteens in Bucharest. The U.E.R. through the communities clothed and fed the 50,000 Jews mobilized to forced labor, although the military regulations of July 14, 1941, provided that their maintenance was the responsibility of the government.

### 3. Social canteens for the poor

To feed tens of thousands of poor Jews, about 100 canteens were set up in 62 communities. The canteens offered a hot meal to the poor, the unemployed, the disabled, the elderly, the sick, those in the work detachments, the poor students who attended the classes. In Bucharest alone, there were 25 canteens, where 6,000 Jews served daily meals. A situation of the canteens existing in the autumn of 1942 is given in the table below (Carp, III, 1948: 339-346). Between September and October 1942, canteens operated in the following communities; Arad, Bacău, Bârlad, Blaj, Botoșani, Brașov, Brăila, Buhuși, Buzău, Cernăuți, Deva, Dorohoi, Fălticeni, Focșani, Galați, Ginta, Hârlău, Huși, Iași, Lugoj, Oravița, Piatra-Neamț, Pitești, Pitești R. Sărat, Roman, Sibiu, Tg. Frumos, Tg. Neamț, Tecuci, Timișoara, Tulcea and Vaslui, where 11,408 people ate. Also during this period, 3729 people received food in kind and 20,573 people received money for food purchase (Gingold, 1944: 114-115).

Obtaining the raw materials needed to prepare food was a permanent problem, the Jewish Central being forced to procure them even on the black market, at quite high prices. The canteens were also centers of resistance, including spiritual, a place for socializing and exchanging ideas, information and encouragement in troubled times.

**Table 2. The situation of canteens and beneficiaries in 1942**

No. of communities where there were canteens	No. of people served in canteens	No. of people served at home	No. of people who received help in money	Total
62	17.408	3.729	20.573	42.710

Source: Gingold, 1944: 114-115

### 4. The legal service

The legal service and the placement office were other actions to help the Jewish Central in order to represent before military courts Jews who had deserted from forced labor or accused of speculation, possession and illegal sale of goods, evading the transfer of effects to the authorities. During 1943 alone, the Jewish Central paid 100 million lei for the redemption of punishments. Thus, thousands of Jews were acquitted, the sentences of thousands of Jews were reduced, and most of those sentenced to prison escaped by paying fines (Geller, 2004: 311).

### 5. Aid from the Joint

Help for the Jews in the country but especially for those in Chernivtsi and Transnistria came from the Joint Distribution Committee, which sent money for social assistance worth 35,000 lei per month. Through the Red Cross, the Joint sent a transport of medicines to stop the epidemics in Transnistria. In 1943 the Joint made a

donation of 100,000 Swiss francs also through the Red Cross for Jews in Transnistria but also another 100,000 dollars, money used by the Jewish Central to dress and feed the needy Jews, refugees returning from Transnistria and those who left for Israel during the summer of 1944. In May 1944, four food wagons arrived in Bucharest from the Joint (Barles, 1975: 79). Regarding the help offered to Romanian Jews by the Joint, its representative in Romania, Elias Costiner states that: „during the Holocaust funds were limited. It was only later that Mr. B. Jacobson, a JDC representative, came and provided \$35,000. That was all we had at our disposal until the beginning of 1944, when our first delegate, sent by Saly Mayer, came and brought us the means to operate. Our activity during the war was done under the aegis of the International Red Cross. We worked as if we were an IRC agency, as an illegal agency. The work we were able to do was possible not only due to the money we received from the Joint, but also because we were able to raise money from the Jews in Romania” (Lazăr și Benjamin, 2016:66)

## 6. Social and medical assistance

In the activity of the assistance sections, special attention was paid to the maintenance of institutions such as nursing homes, orphanages, dormitories and canteens. For the Jewish life of the Antonescu regime, the activity of social and medical assistance carried out by the Central, the assistance institutions and the various philanthropic societies was of vital importance. The laws in force have Romanianized Jewish hospitals and health homes, personal and community property; Jews were forbidden to care in Romanian hospitals, therefore, practically, the Jewish population did not have guaranteed medical care.

The medical service of the Jewish communities was part of the social work carried out at the national level by the CER. In Bucharest, there were three medical centers with 125 beds, the "Caritas-Fraternitate" hospital, the "People love" hospital and the "Maternity" hospital. In addition, there were seven clinics in Bucharest: "Halfon", "Poradim", "Voința", "Rahova", "Dr. Iuliu Baraș", "Onescu" and the Orthodox Community Clinic. Only during 1942 they performed 59,432 medical tests and 1562 hospitalizations and the following year, 52,266 medical tests and 1669 hospitalizations (Jewish Almanac, 1943-1944: 220, 224, 227, 249).

There were 12 employed nurses and 30 volunteer nurses and two doctors in the preventive medical system. In 1943 alone, eight volunteer doctors and 42 nurses made 6,000 home visits to poor patients, avoiding a typhus epidemic.

In Iași, there were three hospitals: the Israelite Hospital, the Pediatric Hospital, the Maternity Hospital and four clinics, the hospitals having 200 beds. During 1942, 21,536 medical tests, 1093 operations and 1690 hospitalizations were performed at the Israeli Hospital alone. Jewish hospitals also operated in Galați, Bacău or Dorohoi. Clinics were established in Arad, Buhuși, Botoșani, Bârlad, Brăila, Brașov, Fălticeni, Focșani, Piatra Neamț, Roman, Timișoara, Tecuci and Vaslui (Jewish Almanac, 1943-1944: 198, 200-203). All this medical system maintained by the local communities, treated thousands of Jews, saved many poor people and stopped epidemics through vaccination campaigns.

**Table 3. Situation of community social and health institutions in the period 1940-1944**

Type of institution	1940	1941	1942	1943
Outpatient	2	2	2	2
Social associations	8	4	3	3
Nursing homes	27	24	20	19
Public baths	11	10	7	7
Ritual baths (Mikvaot)	67	62	33	28
	23	28	45	45
Charity houses	1	1	1	1
Clinics	9	10	15	15
Nursery	-	-	1	1
	7	7	6	3
Maternity	3	4	4	3
Orphanages	6	6	6	6
Hospitals	15	13	9	8
<b>Total institutions</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>142</b>

Source: Cajal and Kuller, 2004: 715

CER also helped the 5,000 Jewish refugees who came from Poland and Hungary in April 1944 with clothes and documents. The CER dealt through the county offices with the representation before the military courts of Jews who had dropped out of forced labor or accused of various economic crimes, most of them under the law of speculation. Thus, in May 1943, CER paid for their redemption 100 million lei (Gazeta Evreiască, 1943: 2).

Regarding the contribution of the County Offices to the assistance work, during the years 1942-1943 over 400 million lei were collected. The President of the Central, elaborated a decision on the guidance and coordination of assistance at the national level by setting up the Superior Commission for Guidance and Coordination of Assistance (Gingold; 1944: 119).

The plant also distributed exceptional aid, such as the 1943 holiday aid worth 30 million lei for a number of 3,000 needy families in all Gingold communities; 1944: 121).

**Table 4. The social-sanitary activity in the period 1940-1943**

The year	Nursing homes	Fosters	Canteens	Charity houses	Orphanages	Charitable societies	Others
1940	27	7	23	1	6	2	6
1941	24	7	28	1	6	1	3
1942	20	6	45	1	6	1	3
1943	19	3	46	1	6	1	2

The year	Outpatient	Nursery	Baths	Dispensary	Maternity	policlinici	Hospitals
1940	2	0	11	7	3	2	15
1941	2	0	10	8	4	2	13
1942	2	1	7	14	4	1	9
1943	2	1	7	14	3	1	8

Source: Cajal and Kuller, 2004: 719

## Conclusions

Despite all these relief efforts, the Central was unable to cope with the growing needs, but it should be noted that everything that could be done during the war was done, as evidenced by the survival of a large part of the Jewish population.

The entire assistance work carried out by the community institutions, as insufficient as it was, played an important role in ensuring the survival of many Jews.

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## CONTEMPORARY CZECH SOCIETY: TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

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**Abstract :** *This article examines the main trends and characteristics of Czech society after the transition from communism to liberal democracy in the 1990s. Changes in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres are analyzed, as well as some continuities with the previous period. Available data point to the decline of traditional political participation, the rise of individualism, the aging of the population, and the persistence of ethnic stereotypes. At the same time, the standard of living improved significantly, and Czech society gradually integrated into European structures. Future research could explore the causes and consequences of these developments in more detail.*

**Key words :** *Czech Republic, post-communist society, transition, social change*

### 1. Introduction

The radical changes that the Czech Republic has undergone in the last three decades are of major interest for social science research. The transition from a centralized political and economic system to democracy and a market economy transformed Czech society profoundly, influencing all aspects of public and private life. Understanding this complex process of post-communist transformation remains essential both from the perspective of Czech domestic development and in the wider European context.

The Czech experience offers unique opportunities for investigating the interplay between historical legacy, political actors, civic culture and socio-economic factors in a society in transition (Hanley, 2004). Aspects such as the continuity and break with the communist past, the dynamics of political participation, the evolution of collective mentalities or the impact of European integration represent topics of fundamental research in the social and political sciences.

Although more than three decades have passed since the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, contemporary Czech society still bears the complex imprint of its authoritarian and collectivist legacy. At the same time, integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and exposure to the values of the liberal West significantly influenced Czech culture and political institutions. Understanding the interplay between these divergent historical trends remains essential.

Therefore, this article aims to provide a systematic analysis of the main developments and characteristics of post-communist Czech society. Synthesizing the literature and empirical data can contribute to the academic debate on the transformation of the contemporary Czech Republic and suggest future research directions. The complexity and dynamism of social, political and cultural change deserve in-depth investigation.

## **2. Methodology**

This article uses the method of qualitative social document analysis to investigate trends in contemporary Czech society. Scientific articles, opinion polls, official statistics and secondary data from the Czech Republic over the last three decades were examined. The focus is on identifying key themes and concepts relevant to understanding post-communist transformations.

The search strategy targeted both international academic literature from databases such as JSTOR, Scopus or Web of Science, as well as local Czech sources. Keywords included terms such as "Czech Republic", "post-communism", "transition", "social change", "civic culture", etc. Only works dealing with Czech society after 1989, mainly from sociology, political science and economics, were selected.

The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes and explanatory concepts used to describe political, economic, social and cultural developments. The outline of a comprehensive picture of the characteristic trends was followed, starting from empirical data. The limits of this method relate to the selective and interpretive nature of the approach.

By triangulating international and local perspectives, the article seeks to provide a nuanced picture of post-communist Czech society. The use of a diversity of documentary sources allows the identification of the main dimensions of change, their interference and issues that require further research. The critical review of the literature paves the way for more systematic empirical investigations in the future.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **Political participation and civic culture**

Data indicate a significant decline in conventional political participation after the fall of the communist regime, which required formal involvement in mass organizations controlled by the single party (Hanzl, 2020). Less than 2% of Czechs are members of a political party today, the lowest percentage in the EU (Novakova, 2021). This phenomenon is explained by the discrediting of traditional political parties after decades of totalitarian control. Surveys show

that Czechs have low trust in political institutions and low satisfaction with the functioning of democracy (Simonová, 2020).

Young people seem more disinterested in formal politics and rather get involved in ad hoc civic initiatives on specific topics such as minority rights or environmental protection (Hanzl, 2020). The growth of non-formal civic activism is viewed differently in the literature, with some considering it a sign of the vitality of civil society, while others associate it with populism and the anti-system (Novotný, 2017). Debates continue over the long-term sustainability of these fluid forms of participation.

Surveys also show a decline in trust in the government and a trend towards individualism among new generations of Czech citizens (Simonová, 2019). Some authors believe that the communist legacy of a paternalistic state that controlled all aspects of life left an imprint on post-totalitarian civic culture (Hanley, 2004). More longitudinal research is needed on democratic values and attitudes among different cohorts in the Czech Republic today.

### **Economic and social changes**

The transition to a market economy in the 1990s led to significant increases in Czech GDP, which has now reached almost 90% of the EU average, surpassing other Eastern European states (Mares, 2017). State sector reform and privatizations led to massive layoffs initially, with unemployment rates above 10% in the following decade (Fidrmuc and Horváth, 2018). Later the labor market stabilized, and currently the unemployment rate is below 3%, one of the lowest in the EU.

However, income inequality has risen significantly from a relatively low level during the socialist period. Some authors argue that the mass privatizations of the 1990s favored elites connected to former communist networks (Svejnar, 2013). Regional disparities remain high, with a concentration of economic activity around the capital. Automation could threaten certain professional categories with a low level of education and qualification (Chmelik et al., 2020).

The Czech Republic also faces an aging population, with one of the lowest birth rates in the EU (Cesky Statisticky Urad, 2021). This trend is explained by the increased costs of starting a family for young people and post-transition instability. Migration flows are limited compared to Western Europe, with many qualified young people choosing to work abroad. The integration of the approximately 500,000 members of the Roma minority remains problematic (Hanzlová, 2019).

## **Cultural and mindset changes**

Contradictory data indicate both the persistence of ethnic and nationalist stereotypes in Czech society and a tendency towards openness to diversity (Simonová, 2020). Recent surveys show that more than half of the population believes that the country receives too many immigrants, although the actual flows are low (CVVM, 2018). On the other hand, young people seem more tolerant of minorities and immigrants than previous generations, and anti-immigration parties have limited electoral support.

Scholars debate the extent to which the authoritarian legacy of the communist regime continues to influence mindsets, particularly conformism and civic passivity (Hanzl, 2020). Some argue that the system change of 1989–1990 was too rapid to erase decades of state paternalism, while others highlight the resilience of Czech civil society (Ekiert and Kubik, 2018). Globalization and European integration are gradually promoting new individualistic and liberal values, at least among young people. The impact of these external influences remains a subject of study.

## **4. Conclusions**

This article examined the main trends characterizing Czech society in the post-communist period. The dramatic transformations after 1989 led to profound changes in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. However, certain aspects of the communist historical legacy seem to persist in mentalities and behaviors.

Politically, the data indicate a sharp decline in conventional party participation and a reorientation towards informal civic activism. Trust in institutions remains low, but democracy is strengthened. The market economy has generated growth, but also increased inequality. Issues such as an aging population and automation are putting pressure on the social model.

Culturally, globalization and European integration promote individualism among young people, while older groups retain the reflex of conformity. Attitudes towards minorities have slowly improved. A complex combination is observed between the persistence of state authoritarianism and emerging liberal tendencies.

The main limitation of this study is its synthetic nature, based on secondary data. More in-depth empirical investigations into the specific social dynamics in contemporary Czechia are needed. For example, a comparative approach with other Eastern European states or a focus on the subjective experiences of political and civic actors could be useful. Globalization and recent crises are likely to further shape Czech society in the future.

In conclusion, the transformation of the post-communist Czech Republic remains an open, complex and sometimes contradictory process. The legacy of

history interacts with transnational social influences. Future developments will depend as much on political actors and social mobility as on civic culture and prevailing values. Researchers from various fields are called to further investigate this society in perpetual transformation.

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# CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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**Abstract :** *This article presents the main theoretical frameworks used in contemporary sociology to explain the dynamics of international migration. World system theory, the social network perspective, human capital theory, and the transnational approach are briefly discussed. Each paradigm emphasizes specific explanatory factors: global inequality, social ties, educational attainment, or hybrid identities. The synthesis of macro and micro perspectives provides a complex understanding of the decision to migrate and the experiences of migrants. Limitations of each theoretical model are also noted.*

**Key words:** *migration, theories, sociology, world system, networks, human capital, transnationalism*

## 1. Introduction

International migration has experienced a significant amplification in the context of globalization in recent decades, becoming a central topic of research in the social sciences. UN data show that the number of international migrants has increased from 150 million in 2000 to more than 280 million today, representing approximately 3.5% of the world's population (UN DESA, 2021).

This complex phenomenon poses multiple challenges for both countries of origin and destination. Beyond its demographic dimension, migration interacts with economic, political, cultural and technological transformations that are reshaping the contemporary world. Its sociological understanding thus becomes essential.

There are a variety of theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain the determinants, dynamics and consequences of migratory flows globally. They integrate factors such as inequality between states, transnational social ties, the level of education or cultural hybridization processes.

The purpose of this article is to synthesize the contributions and limitations of the main contemporary sociological paradigms on international migration. Brief discussion of world-system theory, social networks, human capital, and the transnational perspective can highlight how structural and

individual factors combine to shape the decision to migrate and subsequent experiences.

An integrative analysis of these heterogeneous sociological approaches is important to obtain comprehensive explanations of the nature of migration in the age of globalization. It can also identify future challenges and directions for researching a complex, dynamic and multifaceted social phenomenon.

## **2. Methodology**

The article is based on a thematic analysis of the specialized literature in the field of the sociology of migration, especially the seminal works that consolidated the four theoretical perspectives discussed. Academic resources available online in English were consulted, covering the last four decades of debate in this dynamic field of study.

### **2. World system perspective**

World system theory, developed by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s, considers migration as an effect of the global capitalist economic system, which produces and perpetuates inequalities between rich states in the center and poor states in the periphery (Wallerstein, 2004).

In his view, the world economy is hierarchically structured into developed states in the center area, dominated by advanced economic sectors, and underdeveloped states in the periphery, which provide raw materials, labor and markets for the center. This unequal division of power and resources leads to constant flows of cheap labor from the periphery to the center.

Thus, south-north migration is interpreted as a response to the continuous demand for labor from advanced countries, maintained through mechanisms of economic dependence. Subordinate peripheral development makes migration attractive to poor workers in third world states. Migrants contribute to the prosperity of the center but remain marginalized.

This macrostructural paradigm integrates the individual decision to migrate into a larger global context marked by inequality and historical dependency. Critics, however, argue that the theory is too general and difficult to test empirically. It does not account for the variety of migrants' experiences or their agency. Despite these limitations, it remains influential by highlighting the systemic inequities that fuel global labor mobility.

#### **4. Social network theory**

A micro-level alternative is the social network model developed by Massey and colleagues, which focuses on the interpersonal and community ties that facilitate and sustain migration flows (Massey et al., 1993).

According to this perspective, as a sufficient number of migrants from a given region manage to settle in a foreign country, they gradually form social networks that provide help to future migrants. For example, migrants can provide them with information, accommodation, help in finding a job, etc. In this way, migratory chains are created that support the mobility of entire communities.

Unlike world-system theory, this micro-level explanation emphasizes not only economic factors, but also the social and cultural processes that drive migration. Mechanisms such as remittances or the idealization of migrant experiences help maintain flows.

Critics argue, however, that not all networks lead to increased mobility, and social ties do not explain why some networks form and not others. Despite its limitations, this perspective emphasizes the importance of interpersonal and transnational connections in migration dynamics.

#### **5. Theory of human capital**

The human capital perspective, particularly associated with economist Gary Becker, argues that the chances of migrating legally and succeeding in the foreign labor market are greater for more educated and skilled individuals because these skills are highly sought after by developed societies (Becker, 1975).

Thus, global inequality in educational opportunities is a major determinant of patterns of international mobility of highly skilled labor from poor to advanced states. Highly skilled migrants are attracted by higher wages for their expertise.

At the individual level, human capital theory argues that the decision to migrate represents an investment in one's future, based on a rational calculation of costs and benefits. Highly educated migrants reap the greatest economic and social gains from their mobility.

However, this paradigm also has limits. It does not explain why certain groups with roughly equal levels of education and skill show different rates of emigration. Simple economic calculation does not capture the complexity of cultural and social status factors. Furthermore, the human capital perspective tends to ignore unskilled or clandestine migrants. However, it remains influential by highlighting the role of education in migration dynamics.

## 6. The transnational perspective

Finally, transnational theories, associated with names such as Nina Glick Schiller, focus on the complex processes of identity transformation experienced by migrants who maintain strong social, economic and cultural ties to both countries of origin and destination (Glick- Schiller, 1992).

Contrary to classical views that saw migration as rupture and assimilation in new societies, the transnational approach shows how migrant identities become increasingly fluid, multiple and hybrid. They can no longer be placed strictly within a nation-state, but live in social spaces that transcend borders.

This new lens emphasizes the complexity and diversity of the subjective experiences of contemporary migrants. It captures processes such as the creation of diasporas, the militarization of rights, or the preservation of complex cultural identities. Critics argue, however, that transnational perspectives are often too vague and difficult to operationalize empirically.

However, the transnational approach has revolutionized migration studies in recent decades, showing the limits of the state-centric view and integrating the symbolic and cultural aspects of the phenomenon. It remains highly influential in the sociology of migration today.

## 7. Conclusions

International migration is a complex social phenomenon, with multiple facets and implications. UN statistics highlight the dramatic increase in the number of migrants in recent decades, currently reaching more than 280 million globally. This increase poses significant challenges for both poor emigration states and developed countries receiving waves of immigrants.

Beyond its demographic dimension, migration interacts with major economic, political and cultural transformations that are reconfiguring the contemporary world. Therefore, the proper sociological understanding of this phenomenon becomes essential. There are a variety of theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain migration through different factors.

World system theory adopts a macrostructural lens, contextualizing migration within historical global inequalities between center and periphery. The social network perspective focuses on the interpersonal and transnational ties that facilitate mobility. Human capital theory emphasizes the role of education and skills as a determinant of highly specialized labor migration. Finally, the transnational approach analyzes the formation of hybrid cultural identities.

A synthesis of these sociological paradigms can lead to a more complete and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of migration in the context of globalization. However, given the complexity and dynamism of migration, new

empirical research is continually needed to test and refine existing theories, as well as to explore new explanatory perspectives. Future challenges will require integrated and interdisciplinary approaches.

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